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THE BELL OF ST. PAUL'S

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE PLAY BEGINS.

THE well-known and always popular Common Lodging House in Sweet Lilac Walk, Spitalfields, has changed hands more than once since the year 1868. Had one nothing better to do, it would be interesting to follow the fortunes of the successive Chiefs of this institution, as well as the fate of those who have enjoyed its luxuries. This research, however, must be abandoned for other hands, younger and stronger. As regards the appearance of the House in that year, it was very much the same as it is now. For public opinion in such matters is conservative: paint costs money: mere ornament is useless ostentation: even if you were to gild a lodging-house you could do no more than fill it: window cleaning, floor scrubbing, door-step whitening, furniture dusting, and the sweeping of stairs and passages all require the personal effort of somebody—who must be paid: and why perform a task which is neither needed nor appreciated? Would our gallant Tars continue to holystone the decks if their officers ceased to require of them that duty? Certainly not. Then why blame the Master, Warden, Principal, or Dean of the Common Lodging House in Sweet Lilac Walk because he neglects what he is not called upon or expected to perform?

The least desirable, and the cheapest, part of the establishment twenty years ago—perhaps it is so still—was a certain room in the basement. Here there were no beds, every man, woman, and child sleeping on the floor without either bedding or blanket. There was not so much as a wisp of straw to mitigate the hardness of the boards—you cannot even now, I believe, buy or

borrow such a thing as a wisp of straw in the whole of Spitalfields. For all alike there was the floor to lie upon, unless the lodgers preferred to lean against the wall. Yet, since room must be always left for the exercise of choice and individual taste, there were favourite and eligible sites in which the sleeper could be agreeably, gently, and gradually warmed all over by the fire, just as there were others where one would be frozen by distance or roasted by undue proximity.

The room was filled every night. Its occupants were those whom we associate with the Lowest Depth—ignorantly, because no one, not even a Hospital Nurse, has ever found the Lowest Depth. The people who frequent such a room seem at first as if they must be an interesting folk, from whose strange and varied experiences we might be led to expect whole mines of accumulated wisdom and treasures of sagacity. On examination, however, we find that their experiences have all gone for nothing. Their minds are empty, entirely empty. What they learn one day they forget the next: in fact, they never do learn: they do not put together events and draw conclusions: they pay no heed to the wants and desires of any but themselves; they know not any past and they look not for any future: their ideas on the conduct of life have nothing at all to do with the complex civilisation which is around them but does not contain them.

There is a possible classification of mankind which no philosopher, to my knowledge, has hitherto considered. I mean, one based upon the wants, the desires, the aspirations, and the prayers of man, as they vary according to his various social levels. You, dear reader, if you were pressed to own the truth, would doubtless confess that you continually desire above all things the spiritual gifts and graces, and ask for nothing but to advance daily in the practice of virtues too lofty to be even suspected by your humbler brother. You are, in fact, about to take a First Class (Honours) in the Virtue Tripos. On the other hand, your inferior brother—he of the so-called Lowest Depth—if he ever prays (which is indeed doubtful), or if he ever formulates his wants (which he certainly cannot do), would ask for warmth first—warmth is the first factor in physical comfort—and for drink next. Thirdly, he would ask for food; fourthly, for tobacco. As for society: conversation: respectable attire: cleanliness: love: sympathy: self-culture: knowledge: godliness—all these things will come to him by degrees, as one ascends the scale. But at first—*down there*—he asks for nothing but the simplest elements of physical comfort.

The lodgers, then, being such as these, came to the bare room because it was cheap and warm. Here there was every night a great fire built up—one that would last from midnight until six in the morning: they had, therefore, warmth. A jet of gas was

also burning all night, so that the people had light. The lodgers dropped in one after the other and lay down; soon they grew warm: perhaps they were hungry—well, no great matter, better a hundred nights without supper than one in the cold. The air of the room presently became so foul that it might have reminded the historical student (if any were present) of Newgate, Ludgate, or the Compter in the old days. They cared nothing for the foul air: they were warm. The walls streamed: the floor was hard: the place was crammed: their companions were as wretched as themselves:—but they were warm. In the morning they would have to get up and go out and face the cold again: meantime, they were warm.

He who is down, sings the sweet poet of Bedford Clink, need fear no fall. The thought is doubtless a consoling boon to all those who are down. It should be graven on the pewter pots. These people were certainly very low down: their histories, had they been investigated, would have been those of the stonebroke sporting man; the clerk with a lost character; the workman out of work; the penniless thief; the unrepentant—though middle-aged—Magdalene; the bankrupt shopkeeper; the once brilliant masher of the music hall; the prison bird out for a spell of freedom; the tramp of the casual ward: they were, no doubt, all here, with their wives and lady loves. But it is twenty years ago: the goodly company of this night must be nearly all dead. Why disturb the rubbish heap of twenty years? Besides, their successors we have always with us; their stories—which require a good deal of artistic dressing—are always the same; if any of that night's company still survive, their remaining days will be few and evil indeed—full of pneumonia, bronchitis, rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica and asthma: they must now, those who are left, be drawing very near to the clean white bed in the quiet ward, where, after they have undergone the last indignity which Civilisation has in store for them—namely, that of being washed all over—they will be most tenderly cared for; and when the last hour comes they will receive from the Nurse—or perhaps from the Sister, or even from the Chaplain himself—a kindly and affectionate dismissal upon that lonely journey of which we poetically say that it leads—'Whither?'

They lay asleep side by side all through the night. There was no talking: some groaned who had pains; some snored; some coughed; some lay like logs, and some rolled and fidgeted. When the day began they got up, pulled their rags and duds together, and miserably sallied forth without so much as a good morrow, to look for windfalls and strokes of luck: their hands and eyes keen to take advantage of careless costers and purblind salesmen; ready to pick up unobserved trifles, corner bits, block ornaments, scraps, shards, and shreds; open to receive alms and

doles if any should be offered; professing to yearn for jobs and the hardest kinds of work, and lamenting the difficulty of finding employment however tough. But for the most part these people love not odd jobs, and cannot abide regular work—the tramp-casual feels the curse of labour more keenly than his richer brothers: for choice they wait on the Great God Luck, the only deity whom they worship. Some of them have once been steady workmen, perhaps, in the past; but, look you, when a man has been out of work for six months and has pledged his tools, and has dropped out from the company of former mates, he has lost more than his wages: skill and sleight of hand have gone as well; worst of all, the power of work has gone. He cannot work. Whatever offers, he can work no longer. Let us pity the poor casual as much as we possibly can: no creature is more deserving of pity because he cannot be helped upwards. If any one were to give him work to do he could not do it: he can no longer climb, he can only eat. He is condemned to remain, for the rest of his miserable life, a larrikin, a loafer, a hoodlum, a tramp: a creature who will steal, devour, and destroy, but will not produce.

The lodgers, therefore, in this warm room got up when the October sun began to shine upon the streets of Spitalfields. Observe that the sun falls as pleasantly and cheerfully upon these dingy streets as upon the red and golden leaves of the Forest a hundred miles away. By seven o'clock the gas was turned down; the fire had burned itself to white ashes; and the room, save for three children, was quite empty.

These children were lying together in a corner, their arms and legs a good deal mixed, and their heads triangularly disposed, so that each should find upon the other a soft and warm pillow. As for the grace and beauty of the grouping, no young Princes could dispose of themselves more picturesquely than these three little gutter children, all in rags, their faces and hands smirched, their feet bare. They were all three sleeping still.

When the company of the night got up and went forth, one by one, they left open the street door. Then the air, which in the morning is quite as sweet, cool, and refreshing in Spitalfields as in Hyde Park, began to pour into the narrow passage, and thence to fall and flow in a soft, noiseless, and copious cascade down the stairs and into the basement room, rising by degrees, as a lasher rises after rains have swollen the mountain streams. When this cold but invisible pool had risen to a height of four inches and a half the children began to be restless. They rolled their heads: they opened their hands: they began to dream. Naturally, they dreamed that their headaches were gone—they always had a headache in the morning: that they were neither hungry nor cold: that there was nothing to be afraid of, no

cuffs and kicks to expect: that the whole of terror had gone out of their lives: that they were in Heaven—only they knew not the name of the lovely place: that they were sucking oranges, and that their pockets were full of brown sugar. This blissful vision lasted for the space of a minute and a half. Still the cold air continued to mount higher. The children shivered and kicked, clung closer to each other, awoke with a start, and then, with one consent, sat up, rubbing their eyes, and looking about them, conscious that another day had begun. And they wondered, being quite experienced people, though not yet in years, what the day would produce in the way of grub. To such children there is neither breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, nor supper: every meal is a moveable feast: they eat what they can get, and when it comes. A hunch of bread may be breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, or supper: a snack of fried fish—but oh! how seldom it is exhibited except in the shop window!—is a banquet whenever it appears.

As for the fresh air, it mounted higher and higher, inch by inch, driving before it the foul and poisonous breath of the night. Most of this, being forced up the chimney and so discharged upon the roof, rolled heavily about, a deadly, poisonous vapour, until it was blown to pieces, chemically changed, and absorbed with the wholesome smoke of the chimney-pots. It lay clinging to the sloping tiles, it surged over invisible—yet it could be felt—upon the gutters, and rolled into the spout. Here it fell upon three young sparrows, who at the first breath of this deadly brew, gasped, turned back their eyes and dropped forward on their beaks with stiffened limbs, thus cruelly cut off in early promise. The Tom, who was watching them with a half-formed intention from the ambush of the chimney, escaped with typhoid and six weeks of hospital.

The three children 'belonged'—the word must not be taken in its narrowest sense—to a woman who was standing at the street door, her hands upon her hips, a shawl over her head. She was a stout and strong woman whose red and brawny arms proclaimed a strength surpassing that of her sex in general. Her face was weather-beaten, her eyes were black, and her coarse black hair was thick and plentiful. She was—alas for perished youth!—fifty years of age or more. Perhaps in early days her features might have been comely: perhaps not; and to us, really, it matters very little. Her cheeks were blotched; her neck was thick and puffy; her eyes were watery; her lips trembled. These are signs which we commonly associate, rightly or wrongly, with strong drink. She was a woman of terrifying aspect, before whose wrath the bravest man would crouch or fly. She stood at the open door, looking down the narrow street as if she expected some one. In fact she had an appointment; and

while she waited a gentleman appeared walking quickly down the street in order to keep that engagement.

Twenty years ago the appearance of a gentleman in a Spitalfields back street was rare—one should not throw mud at ancestors, but this fact cannot be denied. Therefore, those of the inhabitants who were in the street looked surprised; those who feared the police in plain clothes effaced themselves; those who were in the upper chambers regretted that they had no flowerpot to drop upon the head of the visitor: it was felt that if it had been evening instead of morning, if the street had contained its full population, united action might have bustled the stranger out of his purse, watch, chains, rings, pins, handkerchief, pocketbook, silk hat, and broadcloth, and sent him forth, as Ratcliffe Highway in the good old days loved to dismiss its sailors, into the wide wide world with nothing upon him but a newspaper—and that not the thick and solid *Times*—to keep off the cold and wind and rain.

The gentleman, however, walked along as if he was not in the least afraid of receiving these attentions. In fact, he was not one of those who are afraid of back slums, and if anybody had tried to bustle him there would have been a surprise for that bustler. He was a man about forty, strong, black bearded, well set up.

'Well, old lady,' he said, in a clear ringing voice, 'I am not too early, I see. You are up with the lark of Bethnal Green: you soar and sing at Heaven's gate: your heart is full of praise and your every breath is a hymn. Come down to earth. Alight upon the dewy sward. Where's the boy?'

'He's in the house,' the woman replied, with a flash in her eye which showed that she was swift to wrath and that she only stood nonsense for commercial reasons. 'As for parting with one of those dear children——'

'Yes, I know. Stow that and bring out the boy. Stay! Let me go and find him.'

The woman led the way down the stairs. The three children were now on their feet, shivering in their bath of fresh air, and wondering why they had been left so long. As a rule the duties of the day—that is, the cadge for coppers and crusts, the cuffs and clouts, the bustle and business of the lively street—had already begun by this time. They were hungry, of course, but that was no new thing. There were two boys and a girl. All three were dark-skinned and black-eyed; all three had thick masses of black hair. The two elder looked as if they would grow up into comely youth, if they only got a fair show and a sufficiency of food. The youngest, however, was a most curiously ugly child: his hair was like a coarse mat; his forehead was broad and square but much too large for his face; his black

eyes were large and hollow; his nose was almost flat; his sunken cheeks, wide mouth, and pale face produced the disagreeable impression of a skull with a skin drawn tightly over it.

All three children, at the appearance of their guardian, shrank back and lifted up their hands as if to ward off a blow.

'Here they are, Sir,' said the woman.

'I see. And this'—he laid his hand upon the head of the youngest—'is the one I have bought.'

'Buy them all, good gentleman,' said the woman. 'You can have the lot, if you like. Here's Sal: she's eight already and clever—why, there's no name for her cleverness. She'll be a credit to any one who has the bringing of her up: there's nothing you can't teach Sal. And as for looks, if you think of them, in eight or nine years more she'll be fit for silk stockings, and a carriage of her own. Buy her, good gentleman. You shall have her cheap. There's the other boy, too—my little Pharaoh—the image of his father. Buy the lot.'

'No,' said the good gentleman; 'one is enough for me. The other two jewels shall remain to become your pride and joy, the stay and comfort of your age, my pearl of grandmothers.' He took the youngest of the three children by the arm and drew him gently from the other two. 'Now, granny,' he said, 'remember our conditions. I am to take this boy and you are not to follow him up, or to seek out where he is, or to molest him in any way. He goes out of your hands altogether. In return I take him and bring him up at my own expense, and I give you for him five pounds—five golden sovereigns.'

'Right, Sir. And if you'll take the other two as well——'

'What is his name, did you say?'

'We call him Sammy.'

'Sammy—not as yet a son of the Church: not Samuel; not baptised, I presume? Quite so—Sammy, or Sam. And his surname, if he has one?'

'His father's name was Stanley.'

'Stanley. A good old name. The excellent man is now—where is that father, now?'

'How should I know? On the road, somewhere, he is. He left her.'

'Her? His wife, perhaps?'

'She was my daughter,' the good lady replied, perhaps with evasion—'and she's dead. She died in the London Hospital and left the three kids to me. He's away somewhere in the country.'

'That was hard upon you. Well, this little Prince has a right royal inheritance. His grandmother is—yourself. His father is one of the Nomads who love the black tent and the travelling caravan. His mother is an unknown factor. I should say that his inheritance, if he ever comes to his own, will be the

Vice of all the ages. Lucky little devil! Could I have a better subject?'

The woman heard but understood not.

'Well, old lady, here's the money.' He opened his purse and took out five sovereigns. She held out her hand greedily. 'Stop!' he said. 'Remember the conditions.'

'I'll keep them true. I will, s'elp me.'

'Sal'—she had followed the gentleman to the door and watched him down the street—'Sal,' she cried, 'come up quick. Go after the swell. Find out where he goes. Don't let him see you. Run after him if it is to the end of the world. If you dare to come back without finding where he takes the boy, I'll——'

A mere threat, however vigorous and terrible, only demands the recognition of history when it has been actually carried out. This threat was not carried out.

For eight years of age Sal was remarkably clever and full of resource. She followed the gentleman along Commercial Street to Shoreditch: here he called a four-wheeler, which drove off briskly towards the City. The girl's knowledge of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green—an intricate maze of streets—was profound, considering her youth, but of the City she knew nothing. And here as the crowd grew thicker and it was difficult to run on the pavement and keep a watch on the cab, she took the opportunity of a stoppage and climbed up behind. The people hurrying along Citywards were all, at that hour of the morning, namely, between eight and nine o'clock, the young ladies and gentlemen employed in the City shops: the boys among them too dispirited, thinking of the day's work before them, to remind a cabman of a cut behind: Sal therefore remained undisturbed.

The cab went down Bishopsgate Street and Gracechurch Street: it turned westward at Cannon Street: at Queen Street it turned again to the south and crossed the river by Southwark Bridge. On the other side it presently turned to the right into a region of small streets, with mean houses standing among great factories. In one of these streets it stopped. Sal slid down quickly and retreated to the shelter of a neighbouring lamp-post, where, half hidden, she could watch.

When the gentleman had gone into the house and the cab had driven away, the child left her lamp-post and examined at her ease both house and street.

The house was easy to remember. It was of two stories, with three windows at the top, and two below: the door between the two was not an ordinary door, but set back in a broad frame with two short pillars, not forming a porch but flat with the front of the house. They were pillars of the Doric order, and

the girl noted their shape though she knew not its name. The house was freshly painted—a very noticeable point when one looked around. And there was a brass plate on the door—the girl could not read, yet she could remember the appearance of the letters—they announced that Robert Luttrel, M.D., lived, and presumably practised the science of healing, in that house.

When Sal had thoroughly mastered these details, and was quite certain that she would know the house again immediately and without the least hesitation, she turned her attention to the street. First of all, it was unlike any street she had ever seen in the Quarter familiar to her. A street in Southwark may be mean, and so far may resemble a street in Spitalfields; but in meanness there are shades and variations. This street had several houses which called aloud for paint and washing, but they were not like the houses she knew: it had also two great works where steam hammers were already practising their trade; at the end was a yard, belonging to other works, and in the yard were three or four great trees: there was also, though the edifice conveyed no meaning to the child of nature, a Church; and, though this fact escaped her attention, it was as profoundly ugly as they made them forty years ago. The other end 'gave' upon the river. The child went to look at it. She had never before seen the river, and in fact knew not whether it was the river Thames or the river Oceanus which runneth round the world: there were barges on it, some with masts and some without; there was a steamer or two plying on the stream; across the river there was a great building, the biggest the child had ever seen.

She noted all these things, and then she addressed herself seriously and with the countenance of a responsible person to the task of getting back to Sweet Lilac Walk. To those children of luxury whose senses have never been sharpened by the goad of daily necessity, the task would have been impossible. This girl, however, had remarked on her way that the cab followed one line south, and another west, and a third south again: she had noted the houses when they turned. Therefore you will understand why she made straight for home on her return, as surely as an Indian in the forest finds his way by the marks he has made on the trees. It was perhaps part of her inheritance that she should thus be able to find her way in a labyrinth of unknown streets. I dare say she would have had no more difficulty through the blackest fog that ever fell upon the unhappy city. More than this, she afterwards, with the greatest ease, conducted to the spot her grandmother, who could not read, any more than herself, but who noted with care both the brass plate and the appearance of the street and begged of a resident to know its name. These items of knowledge the good lady trea-

sured up in her heart. They were things which might some day be converted, as all kinds of knowledge are every day magically converted, into a rod and a staff for her declining years.

If you had looked into the house with the Doric pillars about eight o'clock that same evening you would have seen the boy called Sammy sitting on the hearthrug between Dr. Luttrel and another. They occupied each an armchair beside the fire and were contemplating the child—one, with the pleasurable curiosity which attaches to a Subject; the other, with undisguised loathing for a creature so horribly ugly. His new dress, in fact, made his ugliness the more remarkable. He had been washed in a tub: his hair had been cut short: his rags had been cast into a raging roaring furnace: he was dressed in a pretty garb of navy blue, including a jumper, a lanyard with a knife at the end of it, and knickerbockers. He had eaten during the day three square meals. He was sleepy; but he looked from one to the other with the watchful and suspicious eyes of a wild creature, ready at the least movement to spring to his feet, to fly, to bite, or to kick. Presently, however, his head began to roll and nod; his eyelids began to drop; his shoulders to swing unsteadily; and he sank upon the hearthrug asleep.

'This,' said the Doctor, 'is going to be an experiment of the greatest interest.'

'Is it?' replied the other. 'Meanwhile, the boy is like some dreadful dream in a nightmare.'

'He is, he is. That is one of the most interesting points in the situation. Not only does he look the part, but he acts it, for the present, quite naturally. He steals; he lies; he swears. Why not? He belongs to a race conspicuous for demoniac possession. I bought him for five pounds of his grandmother. I have learned some particulars concerning that dear old lady's family. Her grandfather, a gipsy, is immortalised in the "Annual Register" for the year 1816. He was hanged outside Newgate for a particularly brutal murder committed on the body of a foreign sailor at Wapping. As for her father, who was almost as illustrious, he died in exile at Botany Bay, in the year 1830, after a brilliant career of pig and sheep lifting; the lady herself has always been a thief and the associate of rogues, vagabonds, gipsies, tinkers and tramps; her daughter, now deceased—the mother of this boy—was apparently of the same kidney. The pedigree on the maternal side, therefore'—the Doctor laughed and rubbed his hands—'promises remarkably well. Something ought to come out of that. On the other side, I confess, we are not so rich; we have little to go upon beyond the cardinal fact that the father, like the mother, was a gipsy. But the son of a gipsy may become anything. Through how

many generations of outlaws and wanderers has the blood of this boy been running?'

'You propose, then, to conquer and eradicate these hereditary tendencies?'

'Not at all. I shall make them steps by which he shall mount.' The Doctor leaned forward and spoke with great seriousness. 'I have long wished, my friend, for such an experiment as is now before me. I have desired a mind to mould according to my own views. Impatience of authority is hereditary with this boy: I expect it will rule him as it ruled his forefathers; but in his case it will take a nobler form: it will enable him to act and to think for himself. The poverty of past generations will inspire him with dissatisfaction and a craving for things. His ancestors never had enough of anything: they craved for food and drink. This boy will inherit the craving, but not for food: he will desire, beyond measure, knowledge. Again, the instinct of self-preservation is most strongly developed in the creatures which are hunted. This boy's people have been hunted for hundreds of years. He will therefore inherit the instinct, strongly developed, of suspicion or watchfulness. But he will understand that the highest application of this instinct is to the advance of freedom and humanity.'

'Oh!' said his companion, doubtfully.

'Then, again, none of his people have ever known morality, honour, truth, religion, or any of the virtues which we were taught in childhood.'

'You will teach him these things?'

'Not at all. I shall only put him in the way of learning them. He will learn them for himself. He will deduce for himself, from his own observation, that the happiness and the safety of the individual, as well as the community, depend upon the observance of these virtues by himself and by his friends. He will perceive that he must give as well as take, in order to secure the possibility of getting and the security of having. Then there will gradually spring up in his mind a Natural Religion on which, if he pleases, he may build any ecclesiastical structure that he may admire. In all these things he will be quite free.'

'And meantime——?'

'Meantime he will be watched until he lose his present habits of stealing and lying. They will gradually drop off.'

'Humph! Yet I doubt.'

'You, Clement, are a poet.'

The other blushed with irrepressible pride. 'An unsuccessful poet,' he murmured. Anybody may be unsuccessful, but to be a poet happens to few. Somehow, like the child, he looked the character, having soft blue eyes, a gentle voice, and an un-

practical manner, to say nothing of beautiful brown curls and a long beard as glossy as silk.

'Yet a poet. You have read, as well as written, reams of stuff about as real applied to life as the colours of sunrise over Nature.'

'Nothing is real except these colours.'

'Well, this boy shall read none of these things. He shall not become a sentimentalist: he shall be brought up in no illusions. He shall learn from the first the bare, naked truth in everything. For instance, according to you and to your friends, men are always doing the most heroic and self-denying things.'

'So they are—some of them.'

'According to me, they are always trying to eat up each other and fighting to prevent themselves from being eaten up. I shall teach this boy from the beginning to regard every other man as a possible devourer.'

'Poor little devil!' said the unsuccessful poet.

'Of course he shall be made a Physicist. I shall send him to a German University. If he imbibes a thirst for science, and if I succeed in making him see things clearly without the veil which hangs before most men's eyes, he will have a great career before him. The man without a Veil: the man without Prejudice: the man who can see clearly—think of that!'

'Again—poor little devil!' said the unsympathetic Maker.

'Then, about this hideous face of his. I know two men—both now old. They are brothers: they were originally exactly alike. One of them has given up his life to science, the other has been peddling in small trade all his days. The face of the first brother is full of nobility and of strength: the face of the other is mean and low. Now look at this little wretch.' He stooped and rolled over the sleeping head. 'In twenty years the wild-beast eyes will be steadied with thought and learning: the nose will have emerged: the cheeks will have filled out: the ugly wide mouth will have contracted. Out of a mere savage, common and brutal, of the lowest type, I shall have made a specimen of manhood, such as there are few. He shall be a gentleman, though with no gentle blood in his veins: a scholar, an artist, and a physicist. And he shall look as well as play the part. He shall have a face—not like this wretched degraded type which his father and mother have given him; but a face which belongs to such a man as he will be.'

'I doubt,' his friend repeated. 'Are you still going to call him Sammy Stanley?'

'No. He must be cut off altogether from his own people: he shall never know whence he came or to whom he belongs. He shall bear my surname, and I shall call him my son. As for Christian name, now—what shall I call him?'

'Give him one that will do for either event—failure or success.'

'Very good. What shall it be? Not John or George. Say Bernard, Bertram, Guy, Harold, Oliver.'

'Call him Oliver.'

'I will. Oliver Luttrel. Sleep on, Oliver, unmindful of coming fate. Sleep on, Oliver Luttrel, late Sammy Stanley.'

CHAPTER II.

A SUNSET ON BANK SIDE.

It was the evening of the longest day in all the year. For once the occasion—which is too often neglected—was recognised and honoured. There had been ordered, at the Weather Office, a day of sky so cloudless and blue, with sunshine so warm and air so soft, that all the Italian organ-grinders fell faint and sick with nostalgia, and sat down on the kerb while the women did the work for them: and those strangers who were newly arrived from New York, Melbourne, Paris, or St. Petersburg, asked if this was truly the City of Perpetual Fog. And since it is generally the practice of the English day, if it begins with sunshine, to end in cloud, it was for this occasion specially enjoined, under penalty of the Office and all the clerks being transferred to Labrador, that the evening should, until the very setting of the sun and after, continue clear, bright and beautiful.

About a quarter-past eight on this day a young man was leaning over the wooden wall of the old, first, and original—for many years the only—Embankment, called Bank Side, watching the river and the City on the other side. He stood at that spot—it is on the west of Southwark Bridge, where there are Stairs. They are not ancient Stairs: they are not those at which the Elizabethan citizens landed to see the *matinée* at the Globe, to catch a fleeting rapture at the Baiting of the Bear, or to make love among the winding walks of Paris Gardens. Formerly there were no Stairs between those of Mold Strand on the west, and Saint Mary Overies on the east. These Stairs are mere modern things constructed in the last century. But some thoughtful Resident, ancient or modern, has caused to be built above them a small pen, enclosure, or fold, furnished with two wooden benches, capable of holding at least four persons, and forming a gazebo or belvedere from which to view the river and to take the air. This young man had so luckily chosen his time and was so singularly fortunate in the day, that he had before his eyes quite the most magnificent Spectacle that the world

affords. Owing to the sins of London this splendid show is seldom indeed vouchsafed: and no man is informed beforehand, not even the Meteorological Prophet, when it is going to be performed. Again, the places where one can get a really fine view of it are so few and for the most part so inaccessible—who knoweth, for instance, the way from Piccadilly to Bank Side?—that the greater number are hindered even if they wished to assist at the representation. And lastly, the time for which the Pageant is fixed is, during the summer, inconveniently connected with the dinner-hour. For all these reasons there is never any crowd to see the Show, and the newspapers never send a reporter. Yet those who have been privileged to behold it go about for the rest of their lives declaring that there is no place like London for such a Spectacle; that the mist and moisture of the air cause the colours to be more splendid, and their infinite variety and change more wonderful, than in any other spot upon the world: and that no Transformation Scene was ever presented to an audience, even at the Lane, which can compare with the effects produced by Nature's own scene-painter. They are simple and massive, yet they are continually varying; there are no colours known to the artist like unto those which show in the West for a moment and then pass into something different yet as beautiful: no pigment was ever yet made which could represent them: they have no name: they have never been imitated in silk, satin, jute, flax, or cloth of gold: and as they vary and change from one moment to the next, advancing in splendour as the sun sinks lower, they form such a pageant as would bring tears to the eyes of the oldest Academician if he ever saw it—but he does not, being entirely occupied with the painting of portraits. The sight and the splendour of it would also cause the most conceited young poet, if he ever did see it—but he does not, being occupied wholly with Society—to creep softly and limply out of the press, and away from the company of man, for fear he should be asked to describe these glories in immortal verse.

Where the young man stood, if he looked down the river he could see, close at hand, Southwark Bridge, and, beyond it, the ugly Railway Bridge running into the ugly Railway Station: both together shut out the view of all that lay beyond—London Bridge and the Tower and the masts of the ships in the Pool. Even the most splendid sunset cannot make the Cannon Street Terminus beautiful. But if he looked up the river he saw, first, Blackfriars Bridge, standing out with sharp, clear lines, as if cut out of black cardboard; above it, the dazzling golden light of the western sky; and below it, the broad bosom of the river at the flood. The waters of the river, which under the grey sky of a cloudy day are as brown as the waters of the Arno, and even

under the bluest sky of midday lack the brightness of the Tyne and the sparkle of the Usk, now reflected back the wonders of the evening, and were themselves as splendid as the skies above. Then he looked across the river. Immediately opposite rose the pile of St. Paul's, vast and majestic—Bank Side is now the only place where you have a really good view of St. Paul's. On either side of St. Paul's rose in lesser glory the spire of St. Bride, the Dragon of Bow, the pinnacles of Aldermarie, the Tower of St. Michael's, and I know not how many more of Wren's masterpieces; for though the Great Fire destroyed many Churches which were not rebuilt, and though modern barbarians have pulled down many more, London is still a City of Churches, and there are plenty left for those who, when the Great Return takes place and the merchants once more go back to live within the City walls, will look to worship in the old Churches after the manner of their forefathers. Below the Churches, on the northern bank, are the wharves and warehouses—Paul's Wharf, Baynard's Castle, and the ancient Port of Queenhithe. This old harbour still retaineth its former shape, though its buildings, which were once low, mean, and ugly, yet picturesque, have long since been transformed into others, bigger and uglier, yet not picturesque, and even its old Church with the Golden Ship has been wickedly destroyed by the modern barbarians aforesaid.

Below him, floating bravely on the flood, were moored the broad barges which now, for their number and their goodliness, make the glory of Bank Side. Not one or two are here, but fifty or sixty or a hundred, if you were to count, all of generous tonnage and capacity not to be guessed. There were, this evening, so many of them that they extended even more than halfway across the river. Some had masts and brown canvas sails, now furled, ready to drop down as far as the Nore, if necessary: all were painted gaily with streaks of red, blue, yellow and green: some were empty and waiting for their freight: some were laden, and these seemed to be carrying away all the worthless jetsam of the City: they were heavy in the water with broken glass bottles: they were full of rusty and broken iron: they were piled as high as the arches of the Bridge with empty petroleum barrels. There were no guards or watchmen on board this great fleet—the River Police pay no attention to this marine—for who would lift a lighter? How would one dispose of a stolen barge? What poor wretch is there in all the world sunk so low as to fill his knavish pockets with broken glass?

And on all these things alike—for the sun, whether the sun in Splendour, or the sun at his setting, knows no differences and hath no favourites—on the Dome and upper windows and the Ball and Cross of Paul's, on the Dragon of Bow, on the spires

and weathercocks and chimney-pots: on the warehouses, which in the white light of noon make but a dingy show, on the clumsy barges with their brown sails, lay the splendour of the sunset, so that all was illuminated and transformed: the spires were flames of fire: the Towers belonged to some Castle of Phantasy: the warehouses were of precious marble, all purple and crimson, or veined and streaked with colour, grander than any palaces of Venice: the barges were ships of fairyland: and the river, reflecting the glory of the sky, rolled along in a broad and glowing flood finer even than the Grande Canale when the Italian sunset lies upon its waters and paints its marble stairs. For the sun of Italy is not so soft, and under the sky of Italy there lack the mists which in England assume such depth and charm of colour.

'Yesterday,' said the young man, 'it was all so gloomy and grey that it made one tremble and shudder. To-day it is transformed. Oh! it is like some poet's vision.'

He was, for his part, neither painter nor poet: he had no knowledge, save from books, of Venice and its palaces; therefore he could not make the comparison indicated above. There was nothing like Thames above bridge in the city of his birth or in the country to which he belonged. That city was Sydney, and that country was New South Wales in Australia; and this was only the second day of his first visit to London. Only his second day. And yet he was actually standing on Bank Side, Southwark, at a quarter-past eight in the evening, looking at the sunset, instead of sitting in the stalls listening to the overture of an Opera Bouffe. No other Colonial has ever so much as visited this spot: very few even of the natives of this great city know of it: yet this was only his second evening, and he was here watching the sunset. One would think that he had come all the way from Australia to see a sunset. Once there was a New Zealander who came to visit the land of his ancestors. He was persuaded to take up his quarters at a hotel in America Square. He stayed there for three months. Not an amusement was there throughout Ratcliffe, Shadwell, Wapping and Poplar but he found it out and took his fill of it. Then he returned home, satiated with the pleasures of London. He confessed that for the rest of his life—thank you—he would want no more of London's pleasures. Laurence Waller—this was the name of the young Australian, and he was the son of no less a Personage than Sir David Waller, K.C.M.G., Premier of New South Wales—knew more than this. Yet, for a reason, he had taken a lodging on Bank Side, and this was to be his first night in that lodging.

He was not a conspirator: he was not a social reformer: he was not collecting statistics or facts; he was not compiling a

book on the lower levels: he had no theories to defend: he even disliked the lower levels, and loved a well-behaved man and a well-dressed girl very, very much better than those who are roughly mannered and ill-dressed. He was a rich young man: he was as fond of taking his pleasure as any other well-regulated young man: and he found his pleasure in much the same pursuits: that is to say, he loved to ride, shoot, act, sing, play cricket, sit out with a pretty girl, dance with her, walk with her, talk with her. He also loved to sit at his club and talk to the men. And yet he was on Bank Side. What was he doing there?

Laurence Waller was in stature somewhat taller than the average Englishman, and rather more slightly built: his face, sunburnt from a long voyage, was unmistakably English, though I suppose that Australia will develop her own types of face for herself in the course of a few more generations—she must, if she respects herself. Clearly it was a cheerful face, belonging to a young man who has no quarrel at all with the world, and as yet has found no cause of complaint as to the general management of mankind at large, or his own personality in particular: a face which inspired confidence in old ladies, young ladies, women who are not ladies, in children and in dogs; but not in betting men, welshers, and those who practise the Confidence Lay. Young gentlemen who walk as if they were accustomed to rely on themselves, and carry their hands as if they knew how to use them as fists, do not attract these honest tradesmen. His hair was of a not unusual brown, and his features were regular enough not to mar his expression. His age was well within the twenties. Since the whole of the world that is worth anything at all—love, friendship, ambition, hope, enthusiasm, good digestion, strength, and fighting power—belong essentially to the twenties, he ought on that account alone to be enormously envied by all who have passed into the thirties, or—poor beggars!—even beyond. This said, it seems an unnecessary detail that he possessed somewhat remarkable eyes: they were eyes of a clear, dark blue: eyes which were perceived at once, even by the most shallow observer, to be capable of containing and of reflecting a good deal of light: such as the light of laughter, the light of generous wrath, the light of pity, the light of sympathy, the light of enthusiasm and the light of love. It is by such lights that Australia will be advanced. One does not claim for this young man special merit on account of his eyes. Many young men betray these emotions in a similar manner. On the other hand, some young men never hang out any such signals, perhaps because they feel these things imperfectly.

Laurence presently turned from the river and looked at the place itself where he was standing.

Bank Side is not a fashionable promenade. It does not possess any of the popularity which belongs to the much grander South Embankment higher up the river—that which runs from Westminster to Vauxhall, and is adorned first by St. Thomas's Hospital—which inclines the heart of the working man to works of benevolence; and next by Lambeth Palace, which, on account of its venerable appearance, makes him for the moment tolerant of orthodoxy. Bank Side, again, never has been fashionable. Many parts of London have at one time or the other belonged to the great world: there were Royal Palaces at Baynard's Castle; at Tower Royal; at Cold Harbour, and at St. Bride's; there were palaces in the Strand; illustrious people lived in Drury, and great nobles in Soho. Once there was a Bishop's Palace at Bank Side, but so long ago that the very memory of it has gone long since, and people have forgotten how a certain street there has gotten its name. There was a period—it only lasted twenty years or so—when the people came across from Paul's Wharf and Queen Hithe to the Falcon Stairs to see Shakespeare's new play at the Globe, the Swan, or the Rose. Then the place was inhabited by the player folk, who drank, and sang, and revelled, and laughed, and quarrelled, and fought in the taverns which still—some of them—survive in obscure courts and corners of this forgotten place. The players had, for the most part, short lives, but they were merry: their friends were the poets and such as loved poetry. Their manners and morals were deplorable: their wives and mistresses were as disreputable as themselves, and were constantly getting ducked for their quarrels and their jealousies and their noisy tongues. Now they all lie buried in the churchyard of St. Saviour's, formerly St. Mary Overy. When the theatres were built across the river, the players and the poets exchanged Bank Side for Portugal Street; and presently even the Clink itself, where so many of the poor players had been laid by the heels, was pulled down. There was no longer any use in keeping up the Clink.

The young man, then, turning from the river, considered for a moment the old Embankment with its wooden walls and the houses facing it. The place was littered with coils of rusty chain and bits of rusty machinery. There were cranes for the hoisting of things in and out of the barges; there were stairs to the water; there were planks lying in position for the wheelbarrows between the Embankment and the barges: on the other side of the road were gates leading to factories, works, and wharves. Between the gates were one or two public-houses of a quiet kind, such as Legless Tom—the Dominie's Dux, in 'Jacob Faithful'—might have frequented: a shop or two of a marine or nautical description, and a few private houses. The

light of sunset fell upon this place, which at other times is certainly dingy, as well as upon the river, and made it look beautiful and mysterious. It is generally unknown who are the private residents of Bank Side: if a man wished for perfect retirement, a place where his friends would never think of looking for him, where he could breathe the freshest air to be found in all London, he could not do better than to take one of these houses—there are not many—and live in it. Retirement he would have; but as for quiet, one would not promise him that, because the works, and the cranes, and the yohoing of the bargemen would deprive him of the luxury for fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. But, within one of these private houses, he would be as retired as in the heart of the great African Desert.

By eight o'clock in the evening, however, work is over on the Bank: the voices of those who yo-ho on the barges are silent: there is no more rolling of empty casks or hoisting of crates full of broken glass: the paying out of chains has ceased: the hammering at the Steam Boiler works has stopped for the day: the Vinegar yards are deserted: the workmen have left even the public-houses, which stand open but have no custom: and Bank Side is left for the refreshment of those private folk who may choose to come here for the tasting of the fresh air.

Two or three, in fact, were walking to and fro or lounging on the wooden wall which protects the Bank from the river. The Australian stranger, observing these people, became aware—although he was a stranger and an Australian the thing struck him as incongruous—that they were, somehow, gentlefolk. Nothing had prepared him for gentlefolk in Bank Side, neither his first impression of the previous evening when he engaged his lodgings, nor a certain document in his pocket which had brought him there.

Two of them, who walked together, were men advanced in years—though still vigorous. They passed him once, twice, in silence. As he looked after them he observed that they remained silent. Therefore he rightly concluded, they must be habitual companions. Only men who know each other well are silent when they walk together. That is the true companionship of the soul when one can follow out, undisturbed, a line of thought, ready to stop at a word from the other, or to receive a suggestion from him for the furtherance of that line. One of them was a tall man, but narrow shouldered and stooping. He wore a brown velvet jacket and a felt hat: his long white hair flowed in curls over his coat collar and his white beard flowed over his shirt front. His jacket was old and, as an old friend should, it clung tightly to the arms and to the figure: his trousers had acquired a certain swelling of the knee—a disorder or deformity which is the terror of young men who love to go

in dainty raiment yet have a slender purse. This gentleman, therefore, was not rich. As for the velvet jacket, the broad felt hat, and the long white locks, they looked like outward signs and professional adornments, like the epaulettes of a Naval Officer, or like the hairdresser's apron. These signs may be assumed by the impostor. But the impostor cannot assume a face of delicacy, finely cut and lined, which marks the life of culture and lofty thought: nor can the impostor at sixty years of age clear his eyes of the crows-feet and his mouth of the deep trenches which betray long years spent in greed and gobbling and money-grubbing.

'An artist,' said the young man, wondering that an artist should be found on Bank Side wandering about, as if he was an *habitué*. 'Clearly, an artist. But, perhaps, only a photographer.'

The man by his side wore a black frock coat and the tall hat common to the City and the West End. There was a certain confidence in his walk: he carried his stick as if he would use it as a weapon of offence on small provocation: his head was thrown back: his black beard, streaked with grey, looked as if it was not going to turn quite grey without a struggle: he advanced one leg as he walked, somewhat like the knave of clubs, but with less ostentation.

'Looks like a solicitor,' said the young man. 'Yet a solicitor on Bank Side! May be, however, a Book Agent—or a Tout—or a Temperance Lecturer. Both of them here, perhaps, because they are down on their luck.'

He came from a country where it is not uncommon to meet with gentlemen newly arrived from England, down on their luck. Here there are also many such men, but they shrink from observation. Formerly, gentlemen down on their luck found themselves in the long run comfortably settled in the King's Bench or in its Rules, where there was abundance of good company with the tradition of mirth and jollity. Both King's Bench and the Rules having been abolished, there is now no recognised Retreat. Yet in these days there are so many gentlemen down on their luck that there must be, somewhere, a colony or settlement of them living retired in some suburb, whither their old acquaintance will not follow them. I have sometimes thought of Dalston as a likely spot—there is none likelier: it is clean, airy, and remote from Pall Mall: there is no obtrusion or ostentation of wealth—it is not noisy and vulgar: yet, so far, my researches have not resulted in the proof that Dalston possesses such a colony. Some day it will as certainly be found as the present location of the Ten Tribes. When found, it will prove to be a curious colony, preserving many of the manners, customs, commonplaces and jokes which belonged to the fashionable world when the colonists retired into obscurity.

On the fourth time of passing, one of the two was speaking.

'—— will be President of the Royal Society, I tell you. Yet something troubles the boy. He should be triumphant, and he is uneasy. At his age——'

'Do Presidents of the Royal Society come from Bank Side, I wonder?' murmured Laurence. 'Yet, why not?'

They passed on their way and out of his hearing. Besides, it is mean for any one, except a Novelist, to listen in the street.

Then Laurence saw, standing at the open door of the house opposite—quite the cleanest and most respectable house on Bank Side—a person of spare and slight figure, with a head one or two sizes too large for his height. This is a defect by no means common. His face was smooth and young, yet his hair was grey. A large nose, assisted by a self-respecting carriage, gave him an air of quiet dignity. His dress included a black frock coat buttoned, a tall hat most carefully brushed, and an umbrella tightly rolled in its silk case. He also carried a pair of kid gloves. No part of his dress was in its first youth, or even in its early manhood, but the whole of it taken together conferred upon the wearer that now almost obsolete quality which used to be called Primness. The Prim man may linger still in old-fashioned counting-houses—I know one in a Bank—but he has become so rare that the younger folk have lost knowledge of his kind. Lesser officials of all kinds, fifty years ago, affected Primness as a part of that Personal Dignity which has been since so largely lost.

'Here is Lucius,' said Laurence, sighing. 'My dear mother, I hope you are satisfied, so far.'

It was, in fact, none other than Mr. Lucius Cottle himself, whose lodger the young man had that day become. He descended the two door-steps with as much dignity as if they had been the staircase of a Venetian Palazzo, and as slowly as if he had at his own disposal all the time there is.

'Take off that coat of yours,' said his lodger. 'Give you a swallow-tail with black silk smalls and stockings and a bunch of gold seals at your fob—and you'd do for Charles Lamb. Put you into a velvet coat, with a flowered waistcoat and a powdered wig, and give you a snuff-box—and you'd do for—for—Oliver Goldsmith himself, or the whole of the eighteenth century.'

It is popularly supposed, thanks to Mr. Praed and Mr. Austin Dobson, that the eighteenth century was a period of profound repose and universal leisure. As a matter of prose it was crammed full of hurry and bustle, driving and goading, sweating and oppressing, cursing and kicking, beating, cuffing, and imprisoning. Everybody who was in service of any kind had to hurry up all day long, and the day was then very much longer than it is at present. Had Mr. Lucius Cottle, for

example, lived in the last century, he would have descended those steps and gone about his business with a surprising alacrity.

'He ought to be a Justice of the Peace,' said Laurence, 'or the Proprietor of a Pill.'

When Mr. Lucius Cottle had accomplished the descent of the steps he looked up and down Bank Side with a critical air of ownership. So the country gentleman surveys his stables and his gardens. Then he turned and contemplated the house —this at least was his own—with infinite pride. Certainly the brightest, the most recently painted, and the cleanest on the whole Embankment. It was even provided with a Virginia creeper, now rapidly becoming green with its first shoots of spring. There were clean white curtains to all the windows: the iron railings in the front were clean: the windows were bright: the brass knocker and the handle were polished: the door-steps were white: and on the door there was a brass plate as bright as a mirror, on which was engraved, in large black letters, the name, 'Mr. Cottle.' Some brass plates might have announced 'Cottle'—short; or 'Lucius Cottle;' or 'Mr. Lucius Cottle.' There is, however, a simple greatness in 'Mr. Cottle,' as if all the world ought to know him and should speak of him respectfully, and should be glad to be told where he lived. When he had looked up and down, he crossed the road daintily, as one who goeth in white silk stockings. 'You ought,' said Laurence, 'to have white silk stockings to set-off your thin legs. You were born for them.'

'Good evening, Mr. Waller,' he said, giving his hand. 'You have done well, Sir, in coming to Bank Side.' He spoke slowly, as if his words were valuable. 'Here we breathe.' He expanded his chest and waved his hands. 'Here we catch the pure breeze fresh from the German Ocean. If this place were generally known, those who now live in Eaton or in Berkeley Square would gladly exchange with us who live upon the Bank.'

Laurence suppressed a frivolous remark about a run upon the Bank, and wondered whether such an exchange would be afterwards considered quite fair to both parties.

'When you came to me last night, Mr. Waller,' Mr. Cottle went on, 'you referred me to a very respectable firm—in the Lower Branch. Their assurances made me resolve to accept the responsibility of receiving you as my tenant. You are in England, they told me, on business.'

'On business, Mr. Cottle.'

'You are yourself also, perhaps, in the Law—in the Lower Branch?'

'No, I am not, I am sorry to say, in the Law at all—not even on its Lowest Branch.'

'Well: we cannot, unhappily, all belong to the Profession. I hope, at least, that your stay may be pleasant to you, and that your business may be satisfactory.' He waved his hand with an old-fashioned gesture. 'You will find much that is interesting in the Quarter. As for ourselves, we are, I believe, the oldest Family of Bank Side.'

'Dear me,' said Laurence, smiling pleasantly. 'The oldest Family of Bank Side! For my own part, I only belong to one of the youngest in New South Wales.'

'We have lived here, Sir, for one hundred years. Exactly a hundred years ago my grandfather, whose origin is unknown, commenced schoolmaster in that very house. The Academy was carried on after his decease—he was buried in Cross Bones Yard—by my father for forty years with great distinction. Vicesimus Cottle, indeed, is the only English author, since Shakespeare, who has adorned Bank Side. You are acquainted, Sir, with Cottle's "Practical Elocutionist"?'

The young man murmured something. He felt that in some important points his education had been neglected. Yet he had taken Honours in the University of Sydney. The Colonial, on his first visit home, often experiences this feeling. What is the use of the best education that the Colony affords—they pretend it to be as good as any to be had in Great Britain—if such gaps are left? Why had no one taught him that he must purchase, and diligently peruse, Cottle's 'Practical Elocutionist'?

'The work,' Mr. Cottle told him with severity, 'was composed or compiled in the house where you will this evening sleep. You are an Australian: which may explain and excuse your ignorance. The name of Cottle has not yet—it would appear—reached your shores. This is strange: but it is on its way, Sir. It is on its way there.'

'Perhaps it has already crossed the Line, by this time.'

'You shall have an opportunity, Mr. Waller, while you are with us, of studying that Collection.'

Laurence murmured his gratitude.

'The Society of Bank Side,' the little man continued with an increase of primness, 'is limited, it is true, but far more select than is generally supposed. I learn at my Chambers that we are supposed to have no Society here. The Barge and the Bank, it is believed, belong to each other. The Barge and the Bank,' he repeated, to mark the alliteration. 'That belief, you will find, is a mistake.'

'I assure you, Mr. Cottle, that I have no belief or any opinions at all upon the subject.'

'Houses make not Society, nor does a crowd create civilisation—my father's observation, Sir. Some here are working men: well, Industry produces our boasted wealth. It must therefore be re-

spected. Again—my father. But we have the Learned Profession represented. Those who form our Society are in the habit of meeting here on warm and fine evenings. Here we have, in fact, established an Exchange of Thought. As merchants assemble to exchange goods, so do we draw together on summer evenings to impart and receive the ideas which we conceive and form in winter. One of Vicesimus Cottle's plans, Sir, was the formation of such an Intellectual Exchange, on a larger scale.'

'Indeed,' said Laurence, respectfully.

'For instance, there is Mr. Indagine——'

'What?' the young man started. 'I know that name.'

'Mr. Clement Indagine, the Poet.' He indicated the man in the velvet jacket.

'Oh!' cried Laurence, startled. 'That is Clement, is it? And he is a poet, is he? I don't think I ever saw a poet before. Clement Indagine! I hardly expected—so soon. Clement! Had he not a brother?'

'Truly. You know that? The brother, Æneas, went away a great many years ago—we were all three at school together—and has never since been heard of. Mr. Indagine's companion is Dr. Luttrel, of great distinction in Science. As for me, I am in the Law—the Higher Branch, Sir,' he explained with much dignity. 'Law, Poetry, and Science. Could the great Embankment on the other side boast of more?'

Laurence laughed. He was one of those who laughed easily and pleasantly, and never give offence by laughing.

'Bank Side,' he said, 'is a busy place. That is evident from the wharves. And it has its history. That I know. Bank Side should have its intellectual side, that, I confess, I did not suspect.'

'We have more,' said Mr. Cottle. 'Law, Poetry, and Science, I said. The noblest virtue of mankind, as my father has observed, is Patriotism. The gentleman now approaching—look at him attentively, Mr. Waller—is a distinguished Patriot. His native country is Hungary.'

So that there were four great men of Bank Side, at least, and all of them elderly. The distinguished Patriot wore a flat cloth cap: his coat was grievously old and worn: he had on list slippers, which caused him after dark to be mistaken for a ghost or a garrotter, according to taste or imagination. He was small of stature; his hair was white: he wore no beard or moustache, and his eyes were curiously soft and gentle. He looked as if he must have carried on his Patriotism in an upper chamber, among the ladies.

'Chevalier,' said Mr. Cottle with a little natural pride at having a titled friend, 'this is Mr. Laurence Waller, from Australia. Mr. Waller, this is the celebrated Patriot, the Chevalier

Arminius de Heyn. He has given his name its English equivalent. Chevalier, present Mr. Waller with your card.'

While Laurence wondered what might be the Hungarian form of its Anglicised equivalent De Heyn, the Chevalier politely lifted his limp old cap with one hand, and with the other felt in his breast pocket.

'My card, Sir,' he said, producing a crumpled piece of folded paper. His voice was as gentle as his eyes. 'I hope you will read it, Sir. I wish that we may meet again. I have no other place to meet my friends. To those who choose to listen I have sometimes a great deal—oh!—a great deal to say. Au revoir, Sir.' He again lifted his limp cap and passed on his way.

On the paper which he called his card was printed the following announcement: 'Chevalier Arminius G. de Heyn. Knight of the Legion of St. Sauveur and of San Martino. Honorary Member of the European Philotechnique for the Protection of the Unemployed and the Fatherless. Author of the "Noble Plan," as challenged by Lord Salisbury. Proscribed by the Austrian Government. Corresponding Member of the Scientific Societies of Ecuador, Honduras, and the Argentine Republic. Lecturer on the New Humanity. For terms apply to the Chevalier, care of Joseph Mayes, 183 Southwark Bridge Road.'

The young Australian read this document and gasped.

'Are there any more great men on Bank Side?' he asked, presently recovering. 'Let us get through with the great men before we go on.'

'There are the children,' Mr. Cottle replied, 'my father's grandchildren. It is reasonable to hope that his glories will be revived by them. We live by the Past—my father's observation, Sir: we live in the Present—is it not beautifully true?—we live for the Future. And here come two of the children.'

CHAPTER III

OUT OF THE SUNSET.

THE sun was now on the point of sinking, and the Western splendour was at its best. On either side to North and South were rolling mists threatening to close together and so to spoil the show. But as yet they refrained and were themselves resplendent with borrowed glory. And then, out of the very heart of the sunset, as it seemed, there appeared, lightly floating on a golden cloud, a little boat. She might have been, for the glowing light around, for the deep red gold of which her frame seemed to be made, and for her pair of golden oars, the Royal gig

belonging to Cleopatra's Barge, in which case the Thames would have been the Cydnus; or she might have been that very identical shell which once—Heaven knows how long ago!—was wafted over the seas at sunset—it is impossible at this distance of time to learn whence it came, who was its maker, or how it was propelled—to receive the Queen of Love and Beauty rising from the waters. Heavens! Was this only the turbid Thames? Were they only standing on Bank Side—shabby, mean, and common Bank Side?

As this charmed vessel drew nearer it lost something of its unearthly light and colour, and gained something in distinctness. Then one made out, distinctly, figures, which before were only spectral shapes of coloured light. They became well defined, yet wore a ghostlike air. As the boat floated down, they assumed the appearance of two goddesses, or river nymphs at least, seated in the boat, bathed and wrapped and lapped in light and splendour. One of them had the sculls and the other sat in the stern. Laurence gazed upon this vision, wondering. When the boat drew near the Stairs, being still in the middle of the river outside rows of the barges, she who rowed turned her head. She had thrown off her hat, which lay in the bottom of the boat; the sunset painted her auburn hair the deepest red gold: it made a golden aureole round her head: it made her cheek glow and filled her eyes with a light that no painter would have dared to give them: and changed her dress, which was of some light soft stuff, such as girls love to wear in summer, into a splendid cloth of gold. Nay, this light, marvellous and magical, continued to lie around her and upon her, so that, when she landed and ran up the Stairs, she was still a river nymph or a Queen instead of a plain and simple girl, and he who looked upon her for the first time trembled. The ancients always trembled when they looked upon a nymph for the first time. Love might follow, but trembling came first.

In the days when Love and the Muses had only just been introduced to each other, and Love was still under the charm of those cold, yet graceful ladies, and exchanging his old rusticity for sweetness and poetry and politeness, the swains were happy in that they had these visions aforesaid of nymphs in the woods and on the river-banks and on the sea-shore. They sang, danced, struck the lute, bathed, played ball, and sometimes condescended to permit the shepherd to make love to them. In appearance they were chiefly distinguished from mortal girls by the glowing light that lay upon their faces and lapped their shining limbs. And although, in the matter of love-making, they certainly did come down to the level of short-lived man, that glow never left their limbs nor did that light ever die out upon their faces. In like manner, in the time to follow, Laurence was always to see

upon the head of this girl the golden aureole which crowned her when first he saw her in the boat, the sunset full upon her face.

Now while the boat was yet afar off, there came new footsteps along the walk, and Laurence turned impatiently. Another great man of Bank Side?

'You, Oliver?' asked Mr. Cottle. 'You were unexpected this evening. Your father has not yet gone within. Althea is out in her boat with Cassie. There are the girls'—he pointed to the boat and called the two figures of glory 'the girls.' 'Mr. Waller, this is our friend, Mr. Oliver Luttrel, destined to illustrate the place where he once resided—for he has left Bank Side—by his discoveries in Science.' Yes. Still another great man on Bank Side, Laurence perceived, and this time not elderly. 'Oliver, this is my friend, if I may be permitted so to call him, Mr. Laurence Waller, from Australia, who honours us by becoming a temporary resident on the Bank.'

Laurence saw before him a young man of his own age, but of slighter build and lesser stature. If he was as great a man as the others—surely Mr. Cottle ought to know so simple a thing—he was much better dressed, and in fact, he was groomed after the manner of the young man of Piccadilly, rather than him of the Bank—if there were any young men on the Bank. He was remarkable in personal appearance: his face was pale, and his hair was a thick black mat: his eyes were black and quick: his features were by no means regular, his mouth being too wide, and his nose too broad: yet, taken together with his bright eyes and quick glance, they made a striking and interesting face.

He lifted his hat politely. But in his eyes and in his smile there was plainly to be read the question, 'Who the Devil are you? And what in the world has brought you to Bank Side?' Laurence, reading this unspoken question, wisely refrained from giving any answer. But Oliver continued to look at him curiously and suspiciously. Who was this new friend of Mr. Cottle's? Why did he come to Bank Side? What did he want there? What right had Mr. Cottle to introduce the stranger to him?

When the boat touched the Stairs, Oliver called to the girls—or the goddesses—that he would carry up the things, and ran lightly down, and they all three laughed and talked as old friends and companions should. Then the girls—or the goddesses—mounted the wooden Stairs and Oliver followed them, having tied up the boat with a painter long enough to allow for the tide, carrying the sculls, the cushions, and the rudder. They all three crossed the road to the Private Residence of Mr. Cottle. The envy, hatred, jealousy, and malice which instantly filled the heart of the new comer was nothing more than the tribute due to the beauty of the girls. Any young man with a proper feeling

towards the Sex would have experienced the same emotion. One records it solely in order to show that this young man was endowed with a proper feeling towards the Sex.

Then the sun went down.

Instantly, a little of the splendour went out of the sky and the river: and as the mists rose and rolled together, the glory of the evening began slowly to depart; the colour and warmth and light to die away upon the river: the illuminations in the upper windows of St. Paul's to be extinguished: the marble Palaces to become commonplace warehouses. The magician of the Evening had done his task, and the City and the River and Bank Side itself were going to be left for the night to the hard and ugly truth. Perhaps for many evenings as well, for such a sunset is rare indeed. And the girls had gone indoors. And they were in the company of Mr. Oliver Luttrel. Oh! a great deal of splendour went out of sky and river when the boat touched the Stairs and the girls crossed the road and went indoors.

'I tell you, Clement'—it was one of the two elderly gentlemen still walking together—'something troubles the boy.'

'Mr. Waller,' said Mr. Lucius Cottle, 'it is your first evening. Before you go to your own room let me present you to my family. We aim, Sir, in the words of my lamented Father, at Simplicity without Coarseness, at Refinement without Affectation, at Cheerfulness without Noise. Follow me, Sir.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE ACADEMY.

On entering the room where all these fine things were to be found, Laurence was instantly and mysteriously seized with the sense of having been in the place before. Now, seeing that he was born in Sydney and that he had never until now been in London, this was clearly impossible. Nor had he ever seen a picture or photograph of the room. Yet he had seen it before. Everybody knows, and has felt, this vague sensation; it is by some accepted as a proof of previous existence, or of the transmigration of souls. The least thing causes it; neuralgia is not more unaccountable: an unexpected word, a song, the sight of a flower, anything may bring it on. It is uncomfortable because it cannot be explained; and it is as unsatisfying as spirit-rapping, because it never leads to anything more. I mean that if one could actually remember when, how, with whom, and under what circumstances, the thing partly remembered actually happened on the previous occasion, most interesting

additions to historical knowledge might be expected. As for instance—the flower which I now hold in my hand was once—we will say, five hundred years ago—given me by a Houri in the Gardens of the Old Man of the Mountain, just half an hour before I jumped off the lofty Tower at his command and was swept up in fragments at the foot of it. How charming if one could recall the beauty of those gardens and the delights of those three days—all too short—spent in that mediæval Syrian Rosherville—the only genuine earthly Paradise! But no: the memory refuses anything beyond the mere shred and rag of fact: it says, mysteriously, 'This is not the first time,' and says it with a snap—that and no more. In the case of this room, I believe that the sensation was caused by memory connecting what was before the eye with things read in books. For anyone who had read of interiors in the days of the Third George would at once perceive that here was a room which, in all but the mere perishable materials of carpet and curtain, preserved exactly the bourgeois parlour as it used to flourish under that benign sovereign. The windows were closed, though the evening was so bright and warm—windows in the days of the great George were always kept closed: there still lingered in the air—a survival of the Academy—a sense of scholarly tranquillity. The late Vicesimus Cottle himself might have been sitting in one of the two horsehair armchairs (where, indeed, he had sat every day for fifty years and more) discussing Moral Philosophy, selecting specimens, or manufacturing Maxims, for his 'Practical Elocutionist.' Perhaps the scholarly feeling was partly due to the presence of a large bookcase filled with books. They were not, as anybody could see at a glance, the mere flimsy productions of modern writers: in fact, most of the volumes on the shelves had attained their tenth lustrum and some had achieved their century. They were bound in leather, as all books ought to be—the fragrant Russia, the serviceable Calf, or the polite Morocco. They had formed the Library of the two great scholars, father and son, who had successively conducted the Academy. Consequently they were chiefly classical works, English and the lighter literature being represented by Blair's 'Sermons' and the 'Pursuits of Literature.' Since the decease of Mr. Vicesimus Cottle the books had remained altogether untouched. This is the strange, sad fate of books—such as escape the waste-paper man—at last to stand in rows upon the shelves, never more to be taken down, never more to be read, to do no longer good or harm, to be at last as much forgotten as their authors.

Everything in the room belonged to a Georgian, pre-æsthetic time. There was a sideboard highly polished, made of rosewood, three drawers on top, a cupboard on either side; in the

middle was the home of the coal-scuttle—not a coal-box—and this was of copper burnished like unto fine red gold. The chairs were of the ancient kind, heavy, of polished mahogany, with slippery horsehair seats: there was a black horsehair sofa: an ancient clock ticked in one corner. On the sideboard stood a punch-bowl—yea, the very bowl in which the first Cottle, Academician, had brewed for his friends and on festive occasions many a jorum of steaming punch. Within it lay, now inactive, its silver ladle. On either hand stood candlesticks, two of silver and two brazen: and between them, in its tray of brass, the snuffers still lay, as in old time, ready for daily use. The table was spread for supper—it was a supper of bread and cheese—the plates were of the old willow pattern, and the beer was drawn in a Brown George, which made one think of country taverns, knee-breeches, and powdered hair. The two windows were furnished, besides their white blinds, with that now forgotten form of lower blind which only lingers in certain seaside places. One would expect to find it in the more ancient parts of Ramsgate, for instance. It consists of a frame set with green laths which may be turned in any direction by a kind of screw at the top. You can thus look out, yourself unseen, or you can shut out the view as you please. On the walls, which were wainscoted and painted drab, in panels, with a projecting dado, hung coloured prints in frames which had once been gilt: over the mantelshelf were samplers worked by feminine Cottles long since passed away; there were also certain works, once of the highest art, in wax, representing fruit and flowers; and in the middle hung one of those profile portraits common when the century was still young, executed with a pair of scissors in black paper, the hair, one eye, one ear (all that were visible), and the outline of the nostril indicated by fine touches of gold. The portrait represented an elderly gentleman, partially bald, with commanding features, a splendid lace shirt front, and a double chin: a person of great dignity. It was the portrait of the first historical Cottle. Somehow, in contemplating this portrait one felt as if no mere modern photograph could possibly convey a more lifelike understanding of the man. The fireplace was of the lofty kind, with a serviceable hob and an open chimney, and before it stood a high brass fender of like date. Nothing, in short, had been changed in the room for sixty years at least: not wholly from a conservative attachment to old things, but partly from a tightness always chronic in the family which forbade any expenditure except such as was necessary to prevent the soul from leaving the body and going forth on independent travel. The owner of the house, precise and prim, with his set lips and big nose, might have belonged to the same period and might have sat, himself, for the profile portrait

taken opposite to Exeter Change. He looked, indeed, once this fancy possessed the mind, incomplete without the big lace shirt front. At one of the windows stood the two girls who had come straight down from heaven in an open boat and a cloud of glory. With them stood Oliver and another girl. Their voices, as they talked and laughed, were not out of keeping with the old fashion of the room. There were young people even when George the Third was king. Why should they not talk and laugh together? In the other window was a boy of sixteen, small for his age, and pale, who sat with his face in a book—not one from his grandfather's Library, but a novel—devouring, absorbed, not to be disturbed. A bookish boy of sixteen with a book in his hand is like a beast of prey over a carcase. Touch him—speak to him—disturb him—if you dare! Beside the empty fireplace, in one of the two horsehair armchairs, sat bolt upright, her hands crossed, an elderly lady dressed in black stuff with a widow's cap. She was so exactly like Mr. Cottle with her prim attitude, her slight figure, large head, thin lips, and goodly nose, that she was clearly his sister.

'Cornelia,' said Lucius, 'let me present to you our lodger, Mr. Laurence Waller. This, Mr. Waller, is my sister, Cornelia Sorby—a widow.' Then he whispered, behind his hand, 'In the Church.'

Laurence bowed. Bank Side grew continually more wonderful. In the Church! Was she, perhaps, the widow of a Dean, or an Archdeacon?

'I trust, young gentleman,' said the lady, severely, 'that your manners are orderly and that your hours are early. You are placed, remember, in the Best Bedroom.'

'We hesitated long,' her brother explained, 'before we put up the card in the window. We are a quiet household. Therefore we are afraid of introducing strangers to the house. We do not like things to be broken. The abuse of Hospitality, in the words of my father, is condemned even by the barbarian. The card was put up five years ago, after the death of Mr. Polter, Q.C.'—he sighed heavily—'but there are few passers-by in Bank Side, and no one has ever applied for the apartment except you. Therefore, we are naturally anxious.

'You will find me both early and quiet.'

'Why,' Cornelia looked up sharply, 'I know that voice—surely—and I remember that face. Whose voice is it, Brother?'

'I do not know, Sister. Mr. Waller, we have another sister, Claudia—also widowed. This is her son Felix—Felix Laverock.' Laurence had not seen the young fellow who now shyly advanced from a dark corner and shook hands with him—a large-limbed lad of six feet two in height and twenty-one years of age. 'My nephew—Felix—on a Wharf. My other

sister, Claudia, is not, herself, in the Church. Yet she prophesies.' At this remarkable statement Felix Laverock blushed crimson and hung his head. 'We had a third sister,' Lucius continued, 'the eldest of the family, the unfortunate Julia. She married Mr. Norbery, of whom you may have heard.'

He spoke as if his sisters were known to all the world by their Christian names.

'And these,' he continued, 'are my children. Cassandra'—he indicated the girl who had been sitting in the stern of the boat—'is my eldest. Cassandra exercises the responsible duty of receiving the visitors at a photographer's in Cheapside. Flavia, my second, is in the Telegraph Department, My son, Sempronius, is still at the City of London School. We belong to a family of scholars, Mr. Waller, and, though the Academy is closed for this generation at least, we keep up the connection by names taken from Classic sources. This young lady'—he indicated the other goddess of the sunset—'it would give me the greatest happiness to claim for a daughter. But I cannot. She is the daughter of Mr. Clement Indagine, whom you saw upon the Bank. Althea—permit me—Mr. Laurence Waller.'

The room was still full of the glowing light of the sunset, though now it was passing quickly into twilight. It seemed to the young man as if the girls had brought the glow with them from the west and that it still clung to their figures. Certainly there was sunshine in the face of Althea which seemed to lie there as if it were at home and meant to stay. 'If,' thought the young man, 'there are in Bank Side many such girls as this, it is an unknown country which deserves to be explored.'

The girl was of generous height and fair proportions, her figure rounded, her hands rather large—it would be a great artistic mistake if Nature, who, however, never makes such mistakes, and never frames her real models with any false proportions, were to give tiny hands to large, as well as to little, women: her comely head, which reached the height of five feet seven, was crowned with light brown hair which curled about her head wherever the wind had blown it out: her ample cheek had the warm glow of health as well as the bloom of youth. Her blue eyes were soft and somewhat heavy, but not altogether of the pensive kind. She laughed as one who rejoiceth in her youth and beauty.

'Mr. Cottle,' she said, 'if you are not satisfied with Cassandra and Flavia, you are a very wicked and discontented man.'

'With all three,' Mr. Cottle replied, with the old-fashioned bow of one who pays a compliment, 'I should have been truly happy. With less than all, there is a void.'

She laughed again, put on her hat, nodded to everybody, and ran away. Oliver went with her, or after her. And Laurence

observed that, at the departure of Mr. Oliver Luttrel, the other young man, Felix Laverock, assumed instantly a more cheerful air; that Cassandra, for her part, looked depressed; and that Flavia breathed a short sigh of satisfaction. These symptoms were not lost upon him. Also the show of *camaraderie* with which Oliver went off with the girl caused him a second pang, more severe than the first, of envy, hatred, and malice.

The two daughters of the house belonged to that very large class of London girls—the little woman. They were little in stature, and their shoulders were narrow: their features were little: their hands were very little. But Cassandra, the elder, was pretty as well as little. She was pretty, so to speak, all over: in the shape of her head, in the outline of her face, in her slight figure, in the curve of her chin, in the contour of her ear, and in her little well-shaped hands. She was extremely pretty. Her hair was of the commonest brown colour, but it suited her face and her comely head: her eyes were not particularly fine or unusual, but they were merry eyes: and her lips were laughing lips. Flavia, on the other hand, was also small but not in the least pretty. As is often observed in families, the sisters closely resembled each other, and yet one was pretty and one was plain. Flavia, like her father, was prim. She showed this quality, as he did, by her dress, which was neat and correct, and, as he did, by her manner and her speech. She also inherited a nose of more than usual magnitude.

'You have now seen our family,' said Mr. Cottle. 'We shall be glad of your company, for conversation, any evening before supper.'

He looked as if the Reception was concluded. In Australia, one would have been invited to supper as a matter of course. But the custom of hospitality, in the days of George the Third, was not prevalent in the rank and station to which the Cottles belonged. Besides—which must be considered—where there is a necessity of small economies carried on to the third generation, one does not hastily ask people to eat and drink things which cost money.

'Thank you,' said Laurence. 'With your permission I will go to my own room. You do not object to the smell of tobacco, I hope.'

There was a dead silence. Sempronius raised his book to hide his face. His sisters turned their heads. The widow tossed hers impatiently.

'Permit me, Sister,' said the Head of the Family, lifting his hand. 'Our father, Vicesimus Cottle, would never during the whole of his life suffer the Sanctity of the Academy—he called it the Sanctity—to be profaned by the presence of tobacco. The habit of snuffing he deplored, but, he said, it was the vice of

gentlemen: that of smoking he considered the vice of coal-heavers. During a hundred years this house has never known the smell of the weed except once'—he looked impressively at his son—'once, I say, when a thoughtless boy introduced a cigarette. Before we placed the card in the window——'

'Five years ago,' said Cornelia. 'After the death of Mr. Polter, Q.C.'

'Oh! if you object to smoking——' Laurence interposed.

Mr. Cottle again motioned with his hand '——we then discussed the subject in all its bearings. We agreed that if we received a lodger eligible in all other respects we would, if necessary, waive any further objections, within certain limits. It is now true that most young men take tobacco in some form. You may therefore smoke in your own room, Mr. Waller. We do not forget, also, that the Academy has now been closed for many years. Perhaps, if I may suggest, a seat near the open window—and—and—perhaps you will not be annoyed if we cough should the fumes pass through the doors of the chambers.'

Laurence laughed and retreated.

'I remember his face and his voice,' Cornelia repeated.

'I like his face and I like his voice,' said Cassandra. 'And I hope we shall see a great deal of him.'

'I dreamed of bees last night,' Cornelia said thoughtfully. 'That may mean profit. Then I dreamed of caterpillars, and that means change.'

'He looks as if he will make a dreadful litter, and break things,' said Flavia. 'Father, shall we put away the punch-bowl for fear?'

'I hope we have done wisely,' Mr. Cottle replied. 'He looks quiet, but, after all, he is a strange young man. And from Australia. One never knows. He may turn out to be a Drinking Digger. He may break quantities of things.'

'And we have given him the Best Bedroom,' said Cornelia, shivering.

'He cannot, my dear Sister, break the Best Bed. And after all he may be quiet. Let us hope that he is quiet. They told me in Lincoln's Inn Fields that he belongs to a most respectable family. I do hope that he will not break things. Yes, Flavia, carry the punch-bowl to your own room. It is well to take precautions. He may brandish a cane. I do not think he can harm the candlesticks. And to-morrow I will lend him the "Elocutionist." We must remember, Sister, that he pays us thirty shillings a week: and at the present moment,' he sighed heavily, 'there is little doing. I should not be surprised if the screw—I mean—the Guarantee were lowered once more. One of the gentlemen in Chambers talks of going to Bombay, and

another writes—actually writes—for the daily papers. Tries to carry it off with a laugh. But it is a poor pretence. It was not always thus with the Higher Branch. Not in such a spirit, Sempronius—remember—did Lord Eldon rise.'

CHAPTER V.

THE BEST BEDROOM.

THE lodger was placed, as he had been warned, in the Best Bedroom. Formerly, no family which respected itself was without a Best Bedroom. It was the National recognition of the Duty of Hospitality. But just as the tobacconist used to show outward respect for the Sunday by the single shutter, yet during that day carried on a roaring trade, so the establishment of the Best Bed acknowledged a virtue which was never practised. For no one ever occupied the Best Bedroom. Honest bourgeois folk, when, which was rarely, they did have a guest, put him in an inferior apartment. For a hundred years, ever since the opening of the Academy by the first Cottle, had this room been kept in readiness for the guest who was never expected and was never asked. It seems remarkable. Some customs linger in decay: this continued in its pristine vigour. One might have thought that a lumber room, an unused garret, even a cupboard, might have been set apart and labelled 'Best Bedroom' in deference to ancestral custom: anything would do for the phantom guest. But no: the Law was plain: it must be carried out to the letter: and so the family were squeezed and packed together in obedience to the rule which demanded a Best Bedroom.

A vast four-poster with mahogany columns, a canopy with faded velvet fringe and heavy red curtains looped up, stood in the middle of the room. Lying in such a bed the sleeper might dream of Royal funerals and fancy himself lying in State. This conceit would naturally conduct his thoughts into a profitable field of meditation as edifying to the soul as Young's 'Night Thoughts.'

The rest of the room seemed only regarded as a case or big box for the holding of the Four Poster. There was a chest of drawers in mahogany; there were two chairs also of mahogany; a washing-stand; and on the walls hung two or three prints of an allegorical kind, such as 'Ignorance put to Flight by Resolution,' and 'Perseverance directed by Knowledge,' suggesting the severely moral atmosphere of an Academy. Laurence, in his ignorance, thought that this must have been formerly the bedroom of the late Vicesimus, and wondered how that reverend

ghost would take the smell of tobacco. He was wrong: it had always been the Best Bedroom, and no one for a hundred years had ever slept in it. Between the colossal Bed and the window had been placed (by the fair hands of Flavia) a small table with a cover—only a flimsy modern thing with a common deal top, put there for the convenience of the lodger, who perhaps might wish to write letters. A pair of candles stood upon this table.

Laurence opened the window and looked out. The sunset glory had departed, and a tranquil twilight reigned. But the river was dark: there were no lights upon it or any movement: Bank Side itself, though it was not yet ten o'clock, was deserted. There came no sound of voices from the 'Watermen's Arms' close by. To outward view, a secluded spot and quiet. But cabs and carts rolled over Southwark Bridge; and engines whistled and trains rumbled continuously from the railway station beyond. Many places there are in London which have a secluded look and the appearance of a solemn calm. Bank Side on a summer evening is one. Or there is the Cathedral Close of Horselydown: or the Crescent, Minories: or the Garden Churchyard of St. George's, Ratcliff. They are quiet and undisturbed, but around them and outside them rolls the noisy River of Life which is never still.

Laurence lit the candles, sat down, and began the desecration of the Academy by the smoke of tobacco.

Presently he opened his pocket-book and drew out a letter.

'Now, my dear mother,' he said, 'we will read your letter again on the spot. It will be much more intelligible. Meantime, I have done already more than you desired. I am actually lodging with the people. My cousins, Lucius and Cornelia, little think that they are entertaining an angel.'

'My dearest Son,' the letter began. 'When you have seen the sights of London and been to all the gay places and are able to spare a little time, I wish you to find out for me what has become of certain people who at one time had a great deal to do with my life. Perhaps they are all dead; perhaps they are dispersed and lost sight of: but perhaps you will find some of them.

'Go, first of all, to a place on the south side of the river, called Bank Side. It is a poor and shabby place'—('Not at sunset, mother')—'on the river side, with factories, works, and wharves. There are, however, two or three private houses, and one of them on the west side of Southwark Bridge used to be the residence of my uncle Vicesimus Cottle, who kept a school there. I do not suppose that he is still living, because I speak of a time thirty years ago, but the house was his own, and perhaps some of his children live there still. He had one son, Lucius, and three daughters named Julia, Cornelia and Claudia——'

'Claudia, my dear mother,' said the reader, laying down the letter, 'is now in the Church. She is the widow of an Archdeacon or even a Bishop—she certainly wears an apron: Claudia is a Prophet: and Julia is the unfortunate Julia, now no more. Lucius is now in the Higher Branch of the Law—that is, a Barrister. Perhaps a Queen's Counsel, though why a Barrister should live at Bank Side—— However——'

'The eldest of my cousins was married to a certain Mr. Norbery, about whom I have to tell you a great deal. He was twenty years older than his wife. Of the three cousins Julia was my friend. The others regarded me with the affection that is generally bestowed upon poor relations, but Julia was really kind to me. Therefore, it was a great grief to me when she caught some kind of bad throat and died.

'My sister and I were the poor relations; though indeed there was not much wealth in the family. We were so poor that we had to leave school and go to work at a very early age. My sister was employed in a City shop where she made trimmings, and I presently became a daily dressmaker. That means that for a shilling a day and dinner and tea I went out to people's houses and sewed for them. In some houses they were kind to me, I remember: but in many they tried to get as much work as they could for the smallest amount of food.'

'Mankind,' said the reader, out of his vast experience, 'are made up of beasts and humans. Mostly beasts.'

'Presently my sister heard of a good place in the country and went away. We wrote to each other for a year, and then my letters came back. And then I went away too, and so we quite lost sight of each other. And I know not what has become of my poor dear Florry, who was once so pretty and so bright. It is a hard thing, my son, to be a poor girl in England. My uncle, upon whom I called regularly on the first Sunday of every month, received me with stately condescension: my two cousins with the kind of warmth which comes from a sense of duty. How strange it is that, even now, with all our wealth and success—when I have my carriages and great houses and the people call me "my Lady," and we are far, far grander people than my cousins ever dreamed about—I still think of them as occupying a position so much higher in the world than my own. Tell me if their house on Bank Side proves overwhelming to you.' The reader looked about him and smiled. 'To me the house represented the highest possible gentility, and no one certainly could have had more dignity than my uncle Vicesimus.

'Soon after Julia died Mr. Norbery greatly astonished me by asking if I would become his housekeeper. He said that I was no stranger to him: that I knew the ways of the house, and

that he knew me for a careful girl and one who would not waste and lavish. He offered me sixteen pounds a year, with board and lodging. His offer seemed to open a door of release from my precarious way of living, and I willingly accepted it. For some unknown reason Cornelia and Claudia chose to be offended. They made me feel that they resented my taking their sister's place, though only as housekeeper: and they said so many unkind things that I left off going to the house and afterwards saw nothing more of my cousins.

'Now, my son, please read carefully what follows, though it will not at first interest you. When you have read it you will understand what I want you to do, and why.

'I knew very well, when I accepted Mr. Norbery's proposal, what he meant by his ways. It was no secret that his ways were niggardly. I knew that he was parsimonious in the highest degree. He would dole out the tea, weigh the bread and the meat, do the marketing: put the house on allowance of everything—all this I knew very well—but at the worst he could not keep up a more thrifty way of life than I had been compelled to follow. Besides, I knew him to be a man who would not treat me with personal unkindness. Therefore, I accepted his offer and became his housekeeper.

'My employer lived at a house in Southwark Bridge Road —I forget the number—but it was one of a row on the east side near Anchor Terrace. It was dingy, because the owner could never make up his mind to spend money in painting it. Within, the furniture was continually being changed, because he was always buying things and selling them at a profit. One day we would be sitting in the midst of the most beautiful and precious carved cabinets, tables, and chairs, and the next upon common chairs taken out of the kitchen with a deal table. And sometimes the walls would be hung with paintings, and at other times they would be quite bare.

'There never was any man so friendless as Mr. Norbery. He had no friends: he seemed to have no acquaintances: he only knew other men by doing business with them. No one ever came to the house: he went nowhere. Some men go to taverns in the evening, for company. But Mr. Norbery sat at home every night, alone. He courted no society. Once I asked him if he had no relations. He hesitated awhile and then replied that he had none. Afterwards, however, I discovered that this was not true. He had relations, as you shall learn.

'He was a money-lender, to begin with. That is to say, money-lending was his principal business. His house in the Southwark Bridge Road was, I suppose, a good central spot for such business. His clients were not young gentlemen of profligate habits, such as one reads of in novels, but the tradesmen

of the Quarter. He knew them all and their private affairs: he knew what mortgages were on their houses or their stocks: what money they had borrowed, and who were behind them: if any of them gave a bill of sale he found it out: if one of them took to drink: if one began to haunt the tavern and the billiard room: if one began to bet upon races or to follow any kind of sport: if one had an extravagant wife, or a worthless son: if the business of one was falling off: if one was a fool and certain to cause his business to decay: he learned it, and traded to his own advantage on the knowledge.

'He was not only a money-lender: he was always attending sales and auctions and buying things which he sold again: he was always looking out for people who had things of whose value they were ignorant—pictures, furniture, china, plate, mirrors, books, anything. When he found such things he knew no rest until he had bought them—of course for a tenth part of their value. He had an agent, clerk, or servant, named Joseph Mayes, who was his jackal, and found out this and all other kinds of information for him—I think he got it from pot-boys, bailiffs, men in possession, marine-store dealers, and so forth, gathering it in the public-houses. He was a fellow of a jovial appearance, though as cold-hearted in reality as his master.

'In short, as I now understand, Mr. Norbery's whole business was to make money out of the necessities, weakness, folly, and wickedness of his fellow-men. It is not an honourable business, though men become rich by means of it. And, in the pursuit of that business, he knew no tenderness, sympathy, or compassion whatever. He exacted his bond.

'His habits of life were uniform. In the morning he went out upon his affairs, and generally remained out until one o'clock. After dinner he sat in his office, which was the front room, until half-past eight in the evening, receiving his clients and transacting business with them. Hither came the unhappy man who hoped by the help of a loan to get clear of his difficulties: hither came the same man, later on, when he had discovered that he had tied a millstone about his neck. There was the widow who had borrowed money to pay her rent, and given a bill of sale upon her furniture for security: the tradesman who had mortgaged his stock: the clerk who wanted to renew his bill: the spendthrift who wanted to give a bill in exchange for money down—they all came. At the opening of business nobody could be more friendly than Mr. Norbery: the thing was very simple: it could be arranged in ten minutes: terms of repayment would be easy. Later on, he became harder: he would explain quite clearly what would happen if the agreement was not carried out. I, who sat in the room behind at my work, could hear the poor creatures weeping and praying for

time, or else, as sometimes happened, cursing the man who had made them sign that bond. Neither prayers nor curses moved him any more than they would have moved the rising tide.

'After supper he had a pipe and a glass of brandy-and-water —his only extravagance—and sometimes he talked: always of his affairs and his wonderful cleverness in getting the better of somebody or other. I understand now, that in these conversations he tried to represent himself as he wished people to regard him, and to think of him as a perfectly just man who wanted no more than the agreement entitled him to demand. I also understand, now, that he was always scheming and contriving to overreach and get the better of his neighbours.

'There was one part of his property—in fact, the most important part—of which he was continually telling me. First he would tell me how he acquired it, and this with so roundabout a story that it was easy to perceive that he was concealing some portions of his history and altering other portions. Evidently it was a story which might be told from another point of view. I also gathered that, in fact, it had been very differently told. It was property which should have belonged to a certain Sylvester Indagine——'

The reader here laid down the letter, the name naturally causing his thoughts to wander to the girl who came out of the boat. Then he remembered a certain fellow-traveller. 'The Professor's name was Sylvester——' he said.

'—— Sylvester Indagine, but Mr. Norbery persuaded him into selling it. He owned that he persuaded him: but then, he explained, Sylvester Indagine was such a poor weak creature that somebody else would have persuaded him. He knew this, he admitted—that the property was bound to go up in value: the unfortunate owner did not know this. What then? He might have known: it was a matter of business: in business one buys and sells and makes profit by getting knowledge. Then, he had given a good price for the property—a much better price than some men would have offered. If Sylvester afterwards died in the Queen's Bench Prison, what had that sale to do with his death? And one evening he said a new thing. "As to what they said about my sister," he said, "that is rubbish. She was dead, and he owed me money. He owed me money." I did not then understand the words, but I remembered them—so that, as I said before, I found out that he had had relations. And this, I am certain, none of my cousins, not even his wife, ever knew.

'Another evening he told me that Sylvester Indagine's son was likely to go off in the same way as his father.

'"There are two boys," he said: "Clement and Æneas. I don't know at this moment where Clement is. Æneas is in a

solicitor's office. And I am afraid he has taken to billiards and drink—yes—to billiards and drink like his father."

'On several occasions he returned to this subject, so as to show that he was watching this young man with interest. And I learned little by little that there was a small property coming to the sons of Sylvester Indagine, and that he hoped to get that property for himself. I confess that I felt a great pity for these young men, round whose feet I could see the snares were spread. But I never saw either of them.

'Now, one night, just before closing time, there was a loud and angry conversation in the office. Sitting in the back parlour with only a glass door of separation, I heard all that was said.

'"What?" cried the speaker, "you thought to do for the son what you had already done for the father. You would persuade them into parting with the little property that is coming to them. You expected Æneas this very evening, and you have got the papers ready for him to sign. Well—he will not come."

'"If he will not sell, Dr. Luttrel, how will he get out of his difficulties? I shall not give him any money."

'"He has already got out of them. I am come to tell you that he has gone away."

'"Oh! you have advised him to run away, have you, Sir? To run away!"

'"At all events, he has run away. He knows now how you have bought up his debts, and why. And he has gone away out of your reach."

'Mr. Norbery said nothing.

'"You!" The speaker was a certain Dr. Luttrel, who had recently settled to practise in the place. He was a young man and said to be clever. "You!"—I could feel that he was pointing his finger at Mr. Norbery—"you—to whom he should have looked for help and advice—have done your best to compass his destruction for the sake of a miserable house or two! The very stones are calling out upon you."

'"I do not hear the voice of those stones. Say what you have to say, and go."

'"You sent your own sister's husband—Æneas Indagine's father—to die in a Debtors' Prison—and now you are trying to rob your sister's sons!"

'He said more, but this was enough. Mr. Norbery, then, had relations. He had nephews. They were Clement and Æneas, the two sons of Sylvester Indagine, the man who had died in the Queen's Bench Prison, whose property he had acquired. And he was scheming to get from them whatever they had. There was never a harder-hearted man.'

'Dr. Luttrel'—said the reader. 'That was the man I saw

to-night. And Clement Indagine was with him. Very well. If the old man is dead, it hardly looks as if he had left his wealth to his nephew.' He went on reading the letter.

'I was by this time engaged to your father: he was a boat-builder at Rotherhithe. I had not ventured to tell Mr. Norbery, because I was afraid. I knew he wanted me to stay with him, and that he would be very angry. But my lover grew impatient and I had to tell him. First of all he fell into a great rage, and declared I was behaving with the grossest ingratitude. Next he fell to cajoling me, and after all sorts of flattering words he offered to double the wages if I would stay on with him. Lastly, he even offered to marry me. "There!" he said, "I will make you the richest woman in the Borough, and I hope that will satisfy you." He seemed amazed that any woman should refuse such an offer. When he understood that nothing could bribe me to give up my sweetheart, he became quite calm, and said in his driest manner—I remember the words as if it was yesterday—"Then, cousin Lucy"—he always called me cousin—"you leave my house in an hour. And now, listen. Six months ago I made my will. I must leave my money to someone, and I left it to you—all of it"—he groaned dismally—"the whole of it; all my beautiful houses and shops and my shares and investments. Backler the lawyer drew the will: Mayes witnessed it: and it is kept in my box at Backler's. Very good. Now I shan't alter that will. I won't leave a sixpence to—to the sons of Sylvester Indagine, and I won't leave a sixpence to Julia's relations. But I will punish you another way. I am going to live for thirty years yet—why not for forty? You shall spend all those years in poverty: your husband shall be a bankrupt: you shall be ruined: and I will not help you. Not until you are an old woman, and have passed your life in misery, will you succeed to your fortune. Meantime, no one will know that it is to be yours, and you will not be able to raise a penny on your expectations. Your husband, I say, shall be a pauper and your children beggars. Now, you can go."

'An hour afterwards I left the house, taking my things with me, and I have never seen him since.

'But his words were partly prophetic, because in two or three months after our wedding my husband was made a bankrupt. I do not understand exactly how the thing was managed, but it was Mr. Norbery who did it by means of some mortgage that he had acquired. The mortgage was of long standing and troubled my husband no more than if it had been rent; but the value of the Yard had gone down, so that when the mortgage was foreclosed it was not possible to raise another to pay it off with.

'At first it really seemed as if the rest of his words were to

come true, because my husband found it difficult to get work, to say nothing of recovering his position. At last we resolved upon trying a new country where Mr. Norbery could no longer pursue us, and in a happy day we came here.

'I am quite certain, my dear boy, that he spoke the truth: I mean, that he really had made that Will and that he was resolved not to make another.

'Go then: find out, first, if he still lives. If he does, tell him who you are, and say, for me, that I do not want any of his fortune, however great it may be, but that it belongs to his nephews, to whom he ought to leave it. If, on the other hand, he is dead, which is more than likely, ascertain what has been done about that will, and put the matter into proper hands so that the property may be restored to his two nephews or their children.

'As regards my cousins, I do not know whether they will receive you in a friendly spirit. But make their acquaintance, unless they are scattered and have left their old house on Bank Side. It may be, perhaps, that some of them are poor and want assistance. Let us help them for the sake of Julia, who was always my very loving friend and cousin.

'As for my sister Florry, I know not where you can look for or how you may find her, or if she still lives. Perhaps, if anyone can tell you about her, it would be Cornelia. Be happy, my dear son, and come back soon to your loving mother,

'LUCY WALLER.'

No one, in the old days, was supposed to require more than an inch and a half of candle in his bedroom. It was on this limited scale that Flavia had furnished the lodger's candlesticks. Therefore, at this point, just as the letter was finished, both candles began simultaneously to flicker in their sockets. Laurence extinguished them and sat awhile pondering, in the twilight.

'Things,' he said, 'coincide in a truly wonderful fashion. I am haunted by Indagines. The Professor was on board the steamer—his Christian name was Sylvester, too. He was coming to England in order to remedy a great wrong, he told me. What great wrong? Did the ghost of the first Sylvester lug off to a debtors' prison the ghost of old Norbery, and is he kept there still? And on my very first night on Bank Side I meet Clement Indagine himself—what relation can he be to the Professor, I wonder? And he is a poet—I have heard of Swinburne and Browning and Locker and Dobson, but I never heard of Indagine. Perhaps he is Swinburne in disguise. Can any wrong have been done to Althea? . . . Althea——' he repeated the name softly. 'She came out of the sunset. She descended

from heaven. Is she the one who is wronged? In that case I should like to take my coat off. And is the Property big, or was it big only in my mother's imagination? Perhaps it consists of half a dozen houses in a Bank Side slum. Hang it! I hope Althea will get it all. She should buy a velvet dress—she would look splendid in crimson velvet. Althea—the beautiful Althea. She came straight out of the clouds—with an attendant Nymph.' Here he yawned, being sleepy. 'I am in the house of my ancestors. Vicesimus—wonder why my mother never told me about the "Practical Elocutionist"—was my great uncle: my grandmother was a Cottle: the original Academician was my great-grandfather. Lucius—of the Higher Branch—is my cousin: Cornelia—in the Church—how the Devil can she be in the Church?—is also my cousin. So is Claudia, who is a Prophet—a Minor Prophet: it would be presumptuous to expect higher rank: and pretty little Cassandra and Flavia the Prim and Sempronius and Felix—they are all—all—all—my cousins. I have got an armful of cousins.'

He looked out of the window again. The broad river flowed, black and silent, at his feet: beyond the river the great Cathedral loomed, high above the warehouses, vast and majestic, solemn in the dim twilight. Across the waters came the boom of the bell striking a half-hour. Then this young man's heart was filled with a strange emotion. He forgot, for the first time in his life, the Sydney home: he forgot the Australian thoughts: his mind went back to the old time, thirty years ago, before ever he was born, when his mother went from house to house earning a shilling a day and her humble food—his mother, now so sweet and gracious a lady—and meekly called once a month at the house of her genteel relations to receive the condescension of the learned Vicesimus and the chilly kindness of Cornelia: and tramped about the mean streets of Southwark with her sister, as poor as herself—the sister who made trimmings in a shop and took a country situation and disappeared. What became of that sister? Whither had she voyaged? Why did she leave off writing? Where was she now?

He now understood for the first time—he had read the letter a dozen times on his voyage home, but with little comprehension—his mother's old life. As he had stood that night to watch the sunset upon the river, so might she have stood a hundred times—with her sisters—with Florry, lost and vanished. Behind her the respectability of the Academy: before her the river and the great Cathedral beyond: her present, a life, hard, ill-paid, uncertain: and for her future nothing but the hope that always lives and mostly dies with youth.

He was among his own people, unknown to them, perhaps bringing gifts from foreign lands. Among his own people. One

cannot choose cousins: they are served out: one is helped to cousins: it is good manners to receive without a murmur whatever cousins are helped. These were, at least, interesting, though not wealthy, cousins. And they were his own people. To a Colonial this may mean more than to a home-born Englishman.

While he sat pondering these things, the clock struck twelve: slowly, every stroke of the bell ringing and circling in the air. It was midnight: even the railway station was quiet at last: the night was very still and calm. And then Laurence saw things ghostly. He clearly saw, standing at the river side, the figures of two poor girls catching each other by the hand. He could see them quite plainly, and he could hear them talking; and one was saying, 'Florry, we are alone in the world—let us never lose each other.' The voice came up to him with the dying echoes of the bell. It was the voice of his mother.

As he stretched his legs between the sheets he heard a little stifled cough which made him sit up and look round, for it seemed to come from the bottom of the bed.

'That's Vicesimus,' he murmured. 'I thought he wouldn't stand it. The Sanctity of the Academy is profaned at last.'

CHAPTER VI.

SUCCESSOR TO S. NORBERY.

THE name of Joseph Mayes may be read upon a zinc plate on the doorpost of No. 483 Southwark Bridge Road. The plate is of zinc because those of brass are often stolen and may be sold, whereas he who steals a zinc plate finds himself in possession of a property which he cannot sell. He might as well steal Honduras Stock. The house, a narrow three-cornered structure, has been of a deplorable dinginess for a long time. The door, however, stands hospitably open all day without even a Saturday half-holiday. In the window is a large printed bill announcing to the world that Joseph Mayes, Successor to S. Norbery, can be consulted from ten in the morning until nine in the evening. Many of his clients, in fact, prefer calling upon him under cover of the night. The bill also informs the passer-by that this useful and accomplished person undertakes many and varied offices. He will advance you, he says, on your own personal security, without fees, promptly, with secrecy, and on most moderate terms, from 5*l.* to 5,000*l.*: he will attend auctions for you: he will value your furniture, library, pictures, and plate: he will negotiate the sale and transfer of your stock, goodwill, and

connection: he will receive your rents, dividends, and interest: he will collect your rents: he will estimate your dilapidations: he will make you an inventory of goods: he will sell or let your house; he will find you a partner: or he will act as your General Agent.

On the morning after his arrival Laurence sallied forth with the vague idea of looking about him: one always learns something by looking about. He found himself in the Southwark Bridge Road, and as he strolled along looking about him with the interest belonging to a new place, his eye fell upon this bill in the window and he stopped to read it. 'Successor to S. Norbery.' Then Mr. Norbery had retired from business or had been called aloft. 'Joseph Mayes.' It was the name of Mr. Norbery's jackal. Well, if he wanted any information about Mr. Norbery, he would probably get it here. He hesitated, read the bill again carefully, and then knocked at the door inscribed 'Office.'

The room was furnished with a high railed desk, such as one sees provided for cashiers in shops. Behind the desk, in the corner, stood a safe, and beside it was a large table. Two chairs were placed in front of the table ready for clients, and one behind it in readiness for Mr. Mayes himself, but at this moment it was occupied by his clerk. A bundle of papers lay on the table before him, and he was apparently reading them and making notes of each. He looked up as Laurence entered. It was none other than the distinguished Hungarian patriot. Laurence felt ashamed of the old country, which could suffer so great a man to become clerk to a money-lender. Australia, he thought, would have given him something better. The Chevalier, however, made no sign of recognition, but went on with his work.

At the desk stood a man, pen in hand, over a great volume of accounts. By the way in which his finger assisted his eye; by his method of holding the pen; by the sprawling big handwriting; and by the ill-shaped figures, was clearly betrayed the lack of education. That he belonged to the baser sort was also proclaimed aloud by his appearance, his voice, and his manners. He was now advanced in years: his white hair made a simple coronet or glory round his red bald head: his face was red and his cheeks full: he was fat: he looked the kind of man who feels really happy only when he sits in a bar-parlour with a glass of something hot, and a few congenial companions: one of those who laugh like ten men over the choice quips and delicate stories and deftly turned epigrams with which the evening would be enlivened: one who would be popular with these tavern friends: and whose popularity would be in no way lessened by the knowledge that he spent his business hours in

overreaching his clients, besting his friends, grinding the noses of the poor, and exacting the letter of his bond. For to these thinkers, of such are the truly admirable among business men.

Mr. Mayes laid his broad forefinger on the book to mark the place.

'Well, Sir,' he said, 'what may be your business?'

'May I have a few words with you?'

'On business? Certainly. On private business, I presume. Certainly. Principals only dealt with. Chevalier, get out.' The Patriot rose meekly and retired through a glass door to an inner room, carrying with him his papers. 'Chevalier'—Mr. Mayes ran after him—'go round to the Bank and get my book. Buy a shilling's worth of postage-stamps. And, on your way, call at the butcher's and get two chops—pick out the biggest and the leanest. And four pounds of potatoes—I won't give more than three farthings a pound. You can have the cold pork for dinner. Look sharp about it. Now, Sir.' Mr. Mayes closed the door and took his own armchair, assuming a paternal and benignant softness of voice, with a sympathetic smile, while he stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes and stretched out his legs. This is an attitude which invites confidence. 'Now, young gentleman, if you are in trouble and your creditors are pressing you: or if you've got to square somebody—young men will be foolish: I've been young myself—and perhaps foolish'—he smiled very sweetly and broadly—'or if you want to raise money on reversionary interests, furniture, or note of hand: or if you've got anything to sell—this is the right shop. Speak out.—Don't be afraid. My clerk is gone, and there is no one to listen. I have been called the Young Man's Best Friend.'

'I do not want to borrow money at all,' said Laurence, abashed at his own solvency.

'Oh!' Mr. Mayes showed a certain amount of disappointment. Not much, but perceptibly some. The smile in his eyes and on his lips slowly faded away. He was no longer one who knew and could sympathise with the follies of youth: he was again the man of business.

'I fear I shall only waste your time.'

'Not much of it, you won't.' Mr. Mayes rose, leaving the chair of benevolence, and assumed an attitude of mastery, standing with his back to the fire and his hands in his pockets. 'Not much, young man. Therefore, so as to waste as little as possible, go on quick!'

'You are, I believe, the successor of Mr. Norbery?'

'I am. Formerly his confidential—ahem—partner.'

'Can you give me his present address?'

'His present address?—Why—Ho! Ho!' he laughed aloud.

'It's a permanent address. You can't miss him. He's occupied the same quarters for five years. It's—Ho! Ho! Ho!—it's Nunhead Cemetery.'

'Mr. Norbery is dead then?'

'Dead as a doornail. Young gentleman, if you didn't know that Mr. Norbery is dead, where have you been for the last five years? If your hair was shorter I should think you'd been enjoying a spell at one of the Queen's Hotels.'

'Mr. Norbery is dead, is he? Excuse my ignorance. I have just come from Australia.'

'Oh! From Australia. Well—the papers were full of it. But I suppose you've got no papers in Australia. What might you be wanting of Mr. Norbery now?'

'I believe that Mr. Norbery left a little Property behind him.'

'A little? Ho! Ho! Ho! A little Property was it?'

'How should I know whether it was little or big?'

'Come now, Mister. I don't, as a general rule, give away information, because I find that it keeps well and sometimes gets to be worth money. But I'll give you this, because there isn't a man, woman, or child in Southwark who couldn't tell you as much. Mr. Norbery died five years ago, in this very house. He left a hundred and forty thousand pounds—a hundred and forty thousand pounds—think of that—a hundred and forty thousand pounds! Come now. Call that a little Property?'

'Indeed, no.'

'Well—but that wasn't all. There was houses and shops—whole rows of houses and shops. I thought I knew most of his Property; but I didn't—not the quarter. To be sure, he always collected his rents himself.'

'A great Property, truly. And what became of it?'

'What became of it? Ah!' Mr. Mayes rubbed his chin and shook his head. 'What became of it? If Mr. Norbery only knew what did become of it, he would come to life again. He would, indeed. There was no Will found among his papers, and there were no heirs to claim the Estate.'

'No heirs?' Laurence thought of the Poet. 'No Will? No heirs to claim the Estate?'

'No heirs. And so the Treasury—actually the Treasury—seized it for the Crown. The Queen got it. Think of that—the Queen! They scooped up all that money and gave it to the Queen. To think that Mr. Norbery should have saved and scraped all his life—only to make the Queen richer!'

'No Will?' Laurence repeated.

'There was no Will. Everything was in order: all his investments were found entered in his private books—not a paper out of its place. But no Will. There was a box—one of those very boxes'—he pointed to the rows of tin boxes—'in Lawyer

Backler's office, with Mr. Norbery's name upon it. But the papers in it were old and worthless. No Will.'

No Will! Mr. Norbery dead! The Estates claimed for the Crown! And no heirs. Then as to Clement Indagine—what was he about?

Nothing ever happens as we expect—this was one of the first discoveries made in philosophy—but this turn of events was more than unexpected. It changed the whole position. If the rightful heirs did not choose to claim the property—and such a property—they must have known the relationship: what was there left to be done? No Will: then his mother had nothing to do with the business, nor he either.

'His late wife's relations,' Mr. Mayes went on, 'sent a petition to the Treasury. But they got nothing because they couldn't show that they had any call to expect anything. Why, they had no more right to the money than I had. Not so much, because I helped the old man to make it.'

'This is very wonderful,' said Laurence.

'Perhaps you're another of 'em,' said Mr. Mayes.

'Perhaps I am. No doubt I must be another of 'em. Who are they?'

'Relations. They've turned up by hundreds. No one could have believed there were so many Norberys in the world. They've heard of it in America and crossed the ocean to prove their claim. But they couldn't. They could prove that their name was Norbery, and they couldn't get no further. P'raps your name is Norbery too. Yet you didn't so much as know that he was dead. As for where he come from nobody knows. Nobody ever heard. They found half a dozen certificates of baptism, any one of which might have been the old man's, but they couldn't prove it.'

'But he had a sister——' Laurence stopped short.

'How d'ye know that? A sister? Well, I was once told a cock and a bull story about a sister and the old Queen's Bench Prison. A sister?'

'Perhaps I was misinformed,' said Laurence.

'I wonder if it's true. A sister. How do you know, and who are you, Mister?'

'Come, Mr. Mayes, let us be business men. That is my concern.'

'You can't be one of the sister's sons—or grandsons. Yet you may be—why not? There's a something in your face that I seem to recollect. Look here, young gentleman.' Mr. Mayes resumed his seat, and with it his aspect of smiling benevolence, with his thumbs in their former position. 'If you can prove that you are a cousin or a nephew or anything, this great fortune is yours—it is yours. Think of that. A hundred and forty

thousand pounds; not to speak of the house property! All your own. And you only about five-and-twenty. Why, you might more than double it by the time you were fifty. You might make it a million before you died. A million! Look here, young gentleman. Confide your case to me. I know all about Mr. Norbery. I'll carry it through for you, and when it is finished I will take, for my own trouble, just a little ten per cent. on all I have made for you. Is that fair? Ten per cent. for me, and ninety—ninety per cent. on a hundred and forty thousand pounds—for you. Why there's no proportion in it.'

'Nothing could be fairer, Mr. Mayes. Unfortunately, however, I am not a cousin or any relation.'

'Ah! that's a pity now.' Once more he abandoned benevolence. 'Well,' he said in an altered voice, 'if that is all you came to know, you've had as much information as you are going to get. Anything else, you'll be charged for. Time's money here, young man, whatever it may be in Australia.'

'There was a Will,' said Laurence.

Mr. Mayes looked up sharply.

'How do you know that? What do you know?'

'There was a Will. I know so much. I know, too, where it was signed and witnessed.'

'Where was it signed and witnessed?'

'At the office of a lawyer named Backler.'

'He is dead. He died two months after Mr. Norbery. But he'd gone silly with too much rum-and-water, and he couldn't answer any questions. Go on.'

'The Will was drawn by that man: it was signed and witnessed in his office, thirty years ago. And you yourself were one of the witnesses.'

Mr. Mayes opened the door of the inner room, but it was empty. The Chevalier was still absent in quest of the potatoes.

'I don't know who you are, young gentleman, but'—here his voice fell to a whisper—'so far, your information is correct. I was one of the witnesses. There was a Will.'

'What became of that Will?'

'I don't know. I am still looking for it. Mr. Norbery may have destroyed it, but I don't think he did. If he had he would have made another. What? Let all his money go to the Crown? No, Sir. As for the contents of that Will, I suppose if you know so much you know a little more.'

'Well,' said Laurence cautiously, 'when the Will is found you will know as much as I.'

'And pray, Sir,' asked Mr. Mayes, with as much an approach to a bullying tone as the superior appearance of this young man would permit—'pray, Sir, who are you?'

'That concerns myself.'

'You are not a claimant: you know there was a Will: you pretend to know the provisions of the Will.'

'No,' said Laurence, 'I make no pretences. Never mind me, Mr. Mayes. Go on searching for that Will. If you find it, we will talk about the next step. You go on looking for it. How are you looking for it? Where are you looking?'

'That's my business.'

'So it is—so it is.'

'If I do find it, them that benefit by it will have to benefit me first.'

'Find it first. Find it first, Mr. Mayes.'

'As for me'—Mr. Mayes continued to follow the same line of thought—'I do myself well whenever I can. And I don't look after my friends till I am done well.'

'Praiseworthy indeed,' Laurence murmured.

'Therefore, if you want me to search, you will have to pay me for my time and trouble.'

'Oh, no! No, Mr. Mayes.' Laurence laughed pleasantly. 'Find it first. Search for it or not, just as you like. I will look in now and then perhaps, just to inquire, you know, if the property is left to me.'

Mr. Mayes betrayed in his face rising wrath. But he remembered that his visitor might know, perhaps, more than he himself knew about the Will, and he resisted the temptation to use swear words.

'Well,' he said, 'it's your own look-out. You know best. Whatever I find I shan't give it away. Don't expect it. Everybody knows me. There's nothing to hide, with me. I buy cheap and I sell dear. That's my motto. I make a bargain and I stick to it.'

'Quite right, Mr. Mayes. Quite right. You are, indeed, the successor of Mr. Norbery.'

Five minutes afterwards, the Chevalier came back, bearing in a basket the potatoes and the chops.

'Chevalier,' his master called, 'put down the things and come here. Do you remember going through the papers I bought out of Lawyer Backler's office, when he died five years ago?'

The Chevalier shook his head.

'You forget everything. I believe you've got a softening. If you took the interest in your work that you ought, considering what you cost, you would remember.'

'How can I remember what happened before I came here? Five years ago I had not the honour of serving you.'

'Humph! Come upstairs.'

Mr. Mayes led the way to the first floor. He unlocked the door of the back room. There was no furniture in it at all, but

the floor was piled with old letters and papers, tied with red tape and covered with dust. They were lying just as they had been thrown out of the sacks when Mr. Mayes bought them.

'I got them cheap, Chevalier. Mr. Norbery began the collection. He showed me how to buy up old papers and to learn the secrets. When he died I bought all his. After the Treasury people had gone through them in search of a Will, they sent them off to be destroyed. But I stopped the man. Just in time, I was. Said his orders were to take 'em to the Mills. Orders be blowed! Let 'em stay where they are, I says, giving him a peep at half-a-crown. Oh! I got the bundle cheap. And then old Backler died and I got his papers, too, much in the same way. Some day, I thought, I would sit down and read the lot. Look! There's the row of old Norbery's books. Every transaction he ever had in his life is in these books. Thousands of secrets there! Thousands of pounds to be made out of them. Think of the family secrets! Think of the forgeries and embezzlements that have been bought off and squared—no one any the wiser! Think of the respectable men—churchwardens and deacons and elders—they believe the old story is dead and gone and forgotten! And think of going down with the proofs in your pocket. What will you give for this little bundle of papers, says you? Eh? Eh? There's thousands in it. But I'm too busy. Besides, I don't like reading papers. Chevalier, if I could only trust you to do it for me!'

Replied the Chevalier in his soft and gentle voice:

'I have never learned to say to a gentleman—Give me money or I will tell your secret.'

'No; you never learned anything half so useful in your dam fool of a country,' said his employer, who, it will be remarked, had acquired the elements of sarcasm. 'You're a Blockhead and an Ass,' he went on, falling back upon more familiar and more readily handled weapons.

'Very likely. I must be both or I should not be here. Shall I go below to prepare the potatoes for the pot?'

'I tell you what you shall do.'

'I am in your service. Command me.'

'Get a chair and a table and bring them here. Pile all these papers on one side and read every one. Whenever you come to one that's got the name of Norbery in it, lay it apart. Then go through these, and if you find anything about his sister, or if you find his Will, or if you find anything that's important—but you won't—you're such a confounded fool, Chevalier. However, try—Mr. Norbery's sister, you know.'

'I quite understand. Mr. Norbery's sister. You wish to find a secret concerning Mr. Norbery's sister. Or you wish to find a Will.'

'You are to do nothing else, Chevalier. Lord! It's worth trying for. He had a sister, that young swell said. Some of 'em used to say so twenty years ago. You'll do nothing else all day long, Chevalier, do you hear?'

'I suppose that I may stop the search in order to fry the chops, and boil the potatoes, and fetch the beer.'

'Nobleman! we must eat.' Mr. Mayes conceded this point gracefully. 'Slack off for meals.'

In this office the word clerk included the word cook. It is not usual. But why not? Both words begin and end with the same letter. The Chevalier was engaged as clerk, a word which might, like the word doctor in a merchant ship, have two meanings. That clerk is doubly valuable who can dish up a toothsome meal in a house where no servant is kept and only an old woman comes in morning and evening, like a laundress of Gray's Inn, to remove the husks and shells and shucks, and to wash the plates. He is very valuable if you get him so cheap as Mr. Mayes got the Chevalier: hours from eight to eight in return for bed and board and—no, one cannot—must not—reveal the whole truth. There are some things—the marketable value of a first novel: the price received for a first picture: and the salary given to such exiles as the Chevalier—which must not be told.

'I wonder,' said Mr. Mayes in conclusion, 'how the old man did leave his money. I'm certain he never destroyed that Will, and I'm certain he never made another. If he had, he would have made me witness it. As for leaving any to his oldest friend—meaning me—he wasn't made that way. Keep your eyes open over them papers, Chevalier.'

His clerk inclined his head gravely.

'And I wonder who the young swell was. Wouldn't leave his name and address. Said he came from Australia. Ah! From Australia, he said. Who can there be in Australia belonging to Mr. Norbery? I never heard him mention Australia. I don't believe he knew that there was such a place. He talked pretty free towards the end, when his wits began to wander, but I never heard him talk about Australia. But he had a sister. That young fellow knows more than he would own to. I'm sure he knows about the sister. Perhaps he's a lawyer's clerk sent over to find out. Why should they send a man over? There's lots of lawyer's clerks here. Perhaps he's a friend. Perhaps he's come to make up a story. As for his not knowing about the Crown and the Estate and the rest of it, that's his artfulness, Chevalier. Mind that. And now let's find out what we can. I wonder who the fellow is.'

The Chevalier, who had begun to turn over some of the dusty papers, made no reply at all. Perhaps he had forgotten the fact

that he knew the name of the young gentleman: perhaps he was a silent Chevalier, who only answered when he was questioned. Perhaps he thought that his duty was simply to obey orders. Perhaps he was not listening. This is possible, because the dust of the papers at this moment caused him to sneeze with enthusiasm.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE BRIDGE.

LAURENCE left the Successor to S. Norbery and turned Citywards, his mind a wreck, gone to pieces upon the Rock of the Unexpected. Only an hour before he had sallied forth serenely confident, his mother's Instructions in his pocket, anxious only about taking the first step. Well. That first step had been taken, and lo! it was like unto the historical kick which shattered the Castle of Cards. There was no Will: it must therefore have been destroyed. Wills, he knew very well, are never lost; they are kept carefully in strong boxes: they are sometimes kept in duplicate: the drafts or original instructions of the client are kept as well: all the papers concerning the Will witnessed by the man Mayes must have been kept by the solicitor who drew it, unless he had received instructions to destroy them. Moreover, his mother had nothing to go upon but the assurance—certainly it bore the appearance of truth—of an angry man. There was no other proof that this Will, which had been undoubtedly executed, bequeathed the Property to his housekeeper. Again, Clement Indagine—here was the most extraordinary thing in the world—must know that he was the nephew, and therefore, failing any will, the heir: why in the name of Wonder did he not claim the estate? Why did he allow the Crown to take his property—his own undoubted property? And, things being so, what further business had he himself upon Bank Side? Why not go back to his hotel and address himself seriously to the Theatres, the Picture Galleries, the Restaurants and the streets of the West End—the only part of London which, as a rule, the Colonial visitor ever sees? On the whole he felt inclined to resent this turn of affairs. Since he could not enact the part, melodramatic but always effective, of the man who turns up in the last act to set everything right, why not go away at once?

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Anybody who pleases may fill up the space indicated by these

stars. It must be devoted to following up the further thoughts of this young man, rudely deprived of the power of doing, in order to gratify his mother, a really great, noble, virtuous, and disinterested action—that of a signal Reparation of a Great Wrong—all in capitals. This blow naturally made him, for the moment, sulky. When we follow with the tourists—a bleating flock—who come to look at the show place of some great Lord, and when we hear the heavy and heartfelt sighs which escape them as they are personally conducted through the old hall, to the library, to the drawing-room, to the dining-room, to the gardens, to the stables, we must always remember that these are not the sighs of spite against fortune which has left this flock so poor, but of sorrow that they are not so rich as to do great and noble deeds. With the key furnished by such a reflection, nothing is easier than to fill up this space. How greatly would many modern histories be improved if such spaces were left everywhere between the incidents, for the reader to fill up out of his own imaginative head!

I say, therefore, this space being now filled up, that Laurence was naturally sulky and resentful against Fortune, that poor goddess who for one grateful friend—and he never half grateful enough—makes every day a thousand enemies. One short hour before, he was the heir to a Property—he knew not how big it was, or how little—with which he was about to deal in a most noble and princely manner. Now he had learned, first, that the Property was of Baronial dimensions: a thing which would have made the Renunciation all the more noble: and, secondly, that his mother was not the heir to it, and that he himself would have no share or part in it at all.

When he arrived at the Bridge, he crossed to the west side and leaned over the iron railings, still considering the new position. Bank Side lay at his feet: not the Bank bathed in sunset glow: but the Bank in the morning, looking grimy, narrow and cumbered with many wares; the Bank in the full flow and running tide of activity: every Wharf and every Factory working with zeal: the Steam Hammers justifying the cost of their erection: the cranes swinging noisily: men carrying heavy crates on their backs or wheeling full barrows up and down planks between the Bank and the barges. All these things, at first, he saw, yet saw not: in order really to see things you want not only eyes but a mind bent on seeing. If, for instance, you stand aside to watch the faces in the City Streets, you will observe, as the men walk swiftly along, that most of them see nothing. They go from end to end of Cheapside and see none of the things on the road, on the pavement, or in the shops. Millions of things go on around us in the town as well as in the country without any man seeing or regarding them. We are

only curious concerning the things we know. Perhaps, since no moment of time ever really dies, but passes away and then lives ever afterwards in the mind, one may in after ages recall these things and reflect how much richer life might have been had we dwelt on our own affairs less and kept our minds more open to the things without. Laurence, therefore, leaned over these railings and looked down upon the River and the Bank with eyes wide open, yet saw nothing, being wholly occupied with this sad reverse of fortune. He was in a trance.

This trance lasted I know not how long—nor does it matter, because in such a trance as this, when the mind is at work but wholly disconnected with the body, time does not exist. It induces the anæsthetic sleep: the eyes are open and the body walks about, dodges cabs, and avoids people; yet nothing is seen, felt, or heard. Sometimes it lasts but a second of time: sometimes it lasts a whole day:—nay, there are men so rapt in their own occupations that they see nothing else, whatever passes before their eyes, all their lives.

This trance, however, came to an end. Gradually, and little by little, Laurence discovered that just below him there was going on a great deal of business and bustle: he began to hear the noise of it: he began to see the activity of it. This was a sign that the trance was working itself out. Then, recovering consciousness, he passed through the stage of passive hearing and seeing, and began unconsciously to exercise the power of Selection. A blessed thing it is for man that he can exercise the power of Selection. Not to see all groups, but one group: not to hear all the noise, but only a part of it, as when you prefer the talk of your companion to the rolling of the carts: not to fall in love with all sweet maidens, but with one. Laurence heard no more the noises below, nor did he see the men at work, because his eye was caught by a little group of two and by a little comedietta that was being played before him in dumb show by two persons.

They stood where an idle crane left a circle free of rusty iron, casks, bricks, pipes or any other merchandise—a crane is a thing which insists on respect and elbow room. The circle was closed in and separated from the vulgar gaze of Bank Side on two sides: on one by the house or cottage belonging to the machinery of the steam crane: on another side by an irregular stack of rusty iron chains, old plates and bits of boilers. The crane stood upon the Bank and the Bank looked upon the river, and there was the low wooden wall of thick planks, the like of which are now no longer used, to protect those who stood there. Probably Cottle the Elder, the first Academician, witnessed the setting up of this sea-wall. It was a strange spot for a trysting-place—if this was a trysting-place. For one of the two was the girl whose auburn hair

the sunset had turned into gold when she rowed the skiff straight out of the West. She looked strangely incongruous in this grimy place, standing under the crane in her light grey costume with the bunch of flowers at her throat. As incongruous—as out of place—would be the apparition of Venus herself upon a hill of Middlesboro' slag.

'It is Althea herself,' said Laurence. 'It is Althea Indagine. It is the Goddess of the Sunset. And the fellow with her is Oliver Luttrel, the chap who is going to be the President of the Royal Society. I wonder what they are doing on Bank Side in the morning. Why is not the Pride of Science in his Laboratory? Why is not the Goddess in her little Heaven? Why does she linger on Bank Side—when there are Parks and lovely places elsewhere:—on Bank Side—among the wheelbarrows and the rusty iron? How grubby it looks in the morning! And how splendid it looked last night! Althea,' he said, taking advantage of his position, 'looks almost better in her natural colours than when the sunset threw a golden cloud about her. Am I an eavesdropper? Is it mean to watch? But at least I cannot hear what they say. To watch Althea—myself unseen—is a venial and a pleasant sin.'

He could not hear her voice, it is true, but he became interested in the dumb show which followed. And since in ordinary conversation young people do not use the little exaggerations of gesture with which the mime emphasises the situation, the plot of the little drama was difficult to make out. A short-sighted man would have seen from the Bridge nothing but a young man and a girl talking together. Well, this happens everywhere. To him there would have been no comedy at all. But the young Australian had eyes as good as any sailor—as keen as any gamekeeper. He saw, not only the little gestures which a frigid civilisation still allows for the indication of emotion, but a tell-tale play of eyes and face and colour. The play was simple and without much incident. Yet it held the House—consisting of one spectator.

The young man Oliver said something. He said it with meaning and he looked at the girl steadily when he said it.

The girl started and changed colour. Then she replied, speaking quickly, as could be seen by the movement of her lips. And she turned away and looked out upon the river.

He made another little speech, and from the motion of his hands it was evident that he wished to conciliate her, but she shook her head.

'Have they quarrelled?' said Laurence. 'Is it a lovers' tiff? Can Althea—Althea—be engaged to that little black beast?'

Then she turned upon him and seemed to speak out at some length and with freedom.

He laughed—it is not pretty to see a man laugh if you cannot hear him as well. And she stopped speaking and turned her face again to the river.

'It looks more than a lovers' quarrel,' said Laurence. 'She is really angry with him.'

Then it was the other actor's turn. He explained the position, using hands and head and always gazing upon the girl. Then his hand went out and tried to take hers. She snatched it away and replied. She was evidently much moved, and her eyes filled with tears. Then she spoke again. She was remonstrating with him or entreating him to do something. He listened with a dogged, stubborn bearing.

Then she turned away and left him standing upon the Bank alone.

'It is all over,' said Laurence.

Not quite. For as he looked again he saw the face of the young man change suddenly and curiously. He was clearly in a rage: when the girl was gone his mouth widened: his nose flattened: his eyes seemed to sink into sockets.

'Good Lord!' cried Laurence. 'What an ugly beast it is! He looks like a skull with the hair on.'

Perhaps the position of the spectator—up in the gallery so to speak—assisted in producing this strange effect.

'What does it all mean?' he asked, his interest thoroughly awakened. 'I believe the future President of the Royal Society has asked the Goddess of the Sunset to be his bride and she has refused him because he is so ugly. Yet, no—I never heard of any man being refused because he was ugly. Women don't care two pence about a man's looks. Perhaps he has done something. Can he have stolen a barge? Or, perhaps the Goddess has no yearning for Science. She looked at one time as if she was answering some threat. Could he be such a beast as to threaten her? No. That is impossible. If I thought that, I would . . . I would . . . step down the stairs and chuck him into the river. But he could not.'

'Yet what matter is it to me?' he went on. 'I've got nothing to do here. My mother's letter is now so much waste paper. And yet that girl——' He became pensive. 'I must wait a little if only to find out what they are all about. There is the poet,' he said, 'who is a poor poet and yet refuses to lift his little finger to become wealthy—why? There have been plenty of poor poets since the world began, but I never remember a poor poet who might have been rich if he had chosen. And there is the Patriot—not to speak of the respectable Mayes. A story is going on of which I cannot guess

either the beginning, or the middle, or the end. Now, if I stay, I shall perhaps find out this story. That will be interesting and perhaps it will not take very long. And, if I am lucky, I shall be able to strike a blow on the right side—that is, of course, the side of Althea. I shall call it the Story of the Silent Heir, or the Heart of Althea. Other people may call it what they like: that is what I mean to call it.'

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

IN RETIREMENT.

When the Cathedral Bell began to strike nine, in the leisurely and dignified manner proper to a Cathedral Bell, Althea put down her work and proceeded to make certain arrangements. That they were part of the daily routine was manifest by the unhesitating and mechanical manner in which she performed her task. A ship's steward could not lay the cloth, even for the sixth time in the day, with less waste of time for consideration than Althea showed in setting out the little round table on the hearthrug, placing the chess-board upon it, arranging the pieces, and putting the two armchairs in position. Everybody would understand at once, merely from her manner of doing it, that the game of chess was a daily pastime. The addition of two pipes, a jar of tobacco, and a box of lights showed that the players were men. And so rapidly did she make these preparations that the last stroke of nine was still ringing and resounding in the air when she added the tobacco as the finishing touch.

The room was that one in the house with the Doric pillars, to which twenty years before Dr. Luttrel had brought the little gipsy. The only change of any importance made during this long period had been the addition of a piano laden with music. There were also a few flowers in a glass—I believe that formerly there were no flowers: and, if anything else, there was the presence of 'work.' The whole of woman's history is contained in the special meaning of that word. A man's work may be symbolised by the spade, the pen, the chisel—by every instrument that his wit has devised: for a woman's work the needle is the only symbol. Courage, my sisters: the world changes and you shall be changed—we shall all be changed. In another generation you shall, if you wish, as no doubt you will wish, wield the spade and brandish the pitchfork; you shall carry the rifle and handle the heavy ordnance. Perhaps the curtains—I believe that formerly there were no curtains—betrayed a woman's presence: mere man would have been contented with white blinds, or green venetians, or, at least, with hangings less dainty. The windows, which gave upon New Thames Street, were open at the top, for reasons which could be explained

by residents in that street to the full satisfaction of curious inquirers. If, gentle reader, you lived in New Thames Street, you would open your windows at the top. There was a bookcase full of books: they were works of modern literature and poetry. But a man of letters would not fail to note that there were no new books among them. And though there were books on the table, there were no journals, magazines, or new novels. One or two oil paintings hung on the wall—landscapes of an old-fashioned kind, imitations of the masters of fifty years ago. On the mantelshelf rested a photograph in a frame: it was the likeness of a young man in the little cap, the shawl over the shoulder, and the boots of a Heidelberg student—none other, in fact, than Oliver, once the gipsy, now a Lecturer in Physical Science, newly made and youngest Fellow of the Royal Society. Over the mantelshelf hung a large portrait in crayons representing another young man. He wore long flowing curls and his hair rose in a romantic wave or crest above a capacious forehead: his whiskers also appeared to have felt the tender influence of the curling irons: his head was thrown back as if in defiance of the world: his right hand, the position of which was artistically indicated by a single stroke or two, was thrust into his bosom: his lips were parted—they were frank, eager, mobile, delicate, sensitive, curved lips: the sunshine lay upon those lips—no other sunshine than that of the Muses' smiles: his eyes, which matched the lips and were at once scornful, inspired, terrible, loving, large and full, flashed with a light of genius such as, I am very certain, no portrait painter of the present day would dare to give to the most richly endowed of living men—but in those days the light which never shone from mortal eyes was considered necessary and becoming and natural in the portraits of poets and men of genius. Have we not seen it flashing from the eyes of Byron, Keats, Shelley? Nay—no rhymester so small but he too must have the bright and piercing light of inspiration glowing in his eyes. Photography has killed the eye in a fine frenzy rolling. There are even poets whose eyes are fishy. Under the portrait was the autograph of the subject, written in a fine flowing hand, with a flourish at the end—most men of genius formerly cultivated a characteristic flourish after their name—'Clement Indagine.' The date of the portrait—1851—was also added.

When Althea had completed her arrangement of the chess-table she stood for a moment—as even the ship's steward above mentioned will do when he has laid even his seventh or eighth cloth of the day—to catch the artistic effect. We are always, when one comes to think of it, setting the scene for the next Act, and Woman is the domestic stage manager. It was the last Act of the day for which she set this scene: the silent game

of chess and the evening tobacco with which her father the Poet and her uncle the Doctor finished the day, while she sat beside them, also in silence, working or reading, unless she played softly so as not to disturb the combinations of the game; save for her music the house was very silent always.

Then the door opened and the original of the crayon portrait appeared. You have seen him already—the man with the long white flowing hair and the brown velvet jacket. His curly black whiskers had now grown downwards and made a beautiful white beard, but he was still to be recognised as the natural development of the portrait of 1851. Many men at sixty are not the natural development, but the distortion, of their own portraits at five-and-twenty. Althea greeted him with a smile on her lips and a doubt in her eyes. Something unusual, she perceived, had happened. Her father's eyes were restless: his hands were trembling: his cheek was flushed: there was excitement in his face.

'Well, dear,' she said, 'you have been on the Bank this evening? Did you speak to anyone? The Doctor was called out an hour ago. Will you wait for him, or will you take your pipe at once?'

'Called out, was he? Sick people show a great want of consideration sometimes. No, dear—no—I will wait a little.' He sat down and began mechanically to play with the pawns, opening with an old and favourite gambit. 'Yes, child, yes.' He answered her question with a curious abruptness. 'Yes, I have been on the Bank. Lucius Cottle was there, and the Chevalier was there, and a stranger, a young gentleman, was with them—and—and—a very curious and remarkable thing happened—I am not sorry that the Doctor has been called out—a very strange thing indeed, a thing which I never looked for—I would rather talk it over quietly with you, before he comes back. Yet, to be sure, it ought not to be strange. You will not be surprised, I dare say, though you will certainly be pleased.'

'What was it? The young gentleman was Mr. Laurence Waller, I suppose, the new lodger at the Cottles'.'

'Possibly. Possibly. What interest have I in the man? None whatever. What does it matter to me if a man takes a lodging on Bank Side on purpose to look at me?'

'To look at you?'

'To look at me, Althea,' he repeated sternly, as if there must not be allowed the least doubt upon that point. 'As I passed this company of three and nodded to Lucius the young man gazed at me with a curiosity and interest which would have been impertinent, but that I overheard him whisper to Lucius Cottle, "Oh! Is that really the Poet?—Really, the Poet?" he asked. A second time and a third time I passed them on my

walk to and fro, and every time that young man followed me with eyes of curiosity. Well, Althea, I cannot help it.' He leaned back in an attitude of resignation. 'If the world has at last found out my retreat I must abandon any further pretence and just expect to be besieged. It may be natural, no doubt, but it is, I confess, unexpected. I might have expected it thirty years ago. Then it would have seemed more natural. Now, it causes a certain kind of shock. Yet it is not unpleasing.'

'Mr. Waller has come from Australia,' said his daughter, wondering. 'He told me that he had come on business. To be sure that need not prevent him from showing a natural curiosity in the appearance of a poet.'

'From Australia! Come from Australia! All that distance on purpose to look upon my face!' He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. 'This, Althea, is gratifying. I confess that it gratifies me very much. It is one of the few clear and tangible proofs of Fame which meet us. We poets move the world, but sometimes only know it by repeated Editions. Sometimes I have thought that I did wrong not to read the papers. I should at least have caught the regrets of the world —its regrets and its repentance for having silenced a Poet— as if Poets were as plentiful as cob-nuts! But no—no—the regrets would have come too late. Let me have no more—no more—to do with the present.' He got up and looked at his own portrait. 'Thirty years ago,' he said sighing, 'I was thirty years old. It was young to be driven from the world. But Keats was killed—they killed him—at an earlier age. Where are they—the men who drove me forth? Dead perhaps— forgotten perhaps—languishing, very likely—long since in merited obscurity. As for the man they hounded down, people now come from the uttermost parts of the earth—I say, Althea, from the uttermost parts of the earth—only to gaze upon him. I am now old, but they have not forgotten me. They have forgotten, I think, the men who did the wrong; but the Poet they have not forgotten.'

'They can never forget you, father.'

'As I came home,' he said with such an elation in his voice and such a light in his eyes—though still far short of the electric spark shown in the Portrait—as his daughter had never before witnessed, 'I began to consider what this might mean. And I understand now—oh! yes'—his voice sank to a happy murmur. 'You have made me understand, my dear. The love of the English-speaking races for a Poet does not begin in far Australia: it is carried thither from home—from these shores: it begins at home: if a man's fame is firmly established over there it must be still more firmly planted here. Do you follow me so far, Althea? It must be still more firmly planted here. Very well.

Then think. My poems must therefore be, by this time, household words. They must be learned in schools and quoted in articles: they must have been made, long since, the subject of essays and criticism—reverent criticism—in the great Quarterlies, which move the thought of the world'—it has been already explained that this Poet lived still in the Fifties, when the great Quarterlies were still great. 'And they must be read,' he continued, 'in America and . . . and . . .' He turned quite pale and tottered. The thought of his own greatness, thus grown silently and unperceived by himself, was too much for him. 'And now they come, from the uttermost ends of the world, only to gaze—to gaze upon the Poet. If they love me so much in Australia, what must they do in England—in London—across the river—almost at my very feet?'

'Oh!' His daughter was carried away with him by this Vision of Universal Fame. 'If they love you in Australia, they must love you ten times as much at home.'

'There cannot be a doubt, my dear,' he replied, trying to be cold. 'I see it all plainly. While I have been waiting here in obscurity the Poems have been slowly—slowly, but surely—sinking into the hearts of the people and circling wider and wider over the world. All the way from Australia! Then think of the power which those poems must have become—here—there—in America—everywhere—all round the globe—the habitable globe. The Englishman speaks to half the globe—nothing less. Why, my dear, a man ought to be satisfied with such success as this. It atones. My daughter, tell me'—he spread out his arms as if they had been the wings of Pegasus—'tell me—have I lived in vain?'

He did not expect any answer to this question—nor was there any answer possible save the murmurous assent of filial piety. Then he turned to the bookcase and took down a volume—it was an octavo of the form always until quite recently used by poets—and held it affectionately between his two hands. 'I cannot open it, Althea,' he said, cuddling and hugging and pressing the volume to his bosom. 'Never once, since I retired, have I desired to open it. This, my dear, is what the world cannot understand. It is the sacredness of verse: of this book have I made an altar on which I have laid all that is best and noblest in myself.' He bowed his head over his own book as one who worships. And his eyes softened and glowed. 'Having placed it there, and knelt before the altar, and prayed awhile, I came away. The precious part of me—the Immortal part—is here—between these two boards.' His eyes grew humid, his voice sank. He fondled the book again affectionately and replaced it on the shelf. 'It is for others to read it now, not for me. I have done my part. It is for you, my child, to use it for the

uplifting and the strengthening of your soul. Yes—yes—I know. You have so used it—yes—yes—in your thoughts and in your daily conversation—I have watched you day by day—I have seen the influence of that verse. From communion with his poetry at last you reflect your father's mind. My dear,' he laid his hand tenderly on Althea's head, 'if I had but one reader in all the world, and that reader were my daughter, I should not have lived in vain.' He sighed again, and descended to a lower level.

'Tell me about this young man from Australia,' he said, sitting down. 'He says he has come on business from Australia, does he? Australian business on Bank Side? Is the colony of New South Wales going to buy scrap iron and empty petroleum casks? And he actually takes a lodging in Bank Side! I have lived here for thirty years and I have never before heard of a stranger coming to live for choice in Bank Side. Why should he? He calls it business, does he? My dear, the excuse is too transparent. But he is young and we will excuse him. Business! Ha! ha! Youth is modest and does not like to confess even its enthusiasm. Why, after all, I like him all the better for it. These reticences, these shrinkings, these hesitations—they are sometimes the note of a great mind—I like him all the better. Well, my dear, I thought to have slipped through life unseen. But it seems as if that dream was to be dispelled.'

'Dear father,' said Althea, taking his hand, 'you must think of me and of my pride in you if people come to look at you.' She was now perfectly and completely carried away by this vision of popularity. 'Remember that the more popular you become, the prouder it will make me. But, indeed, I could never be prouder of my father—whatever glory may be showered upon him—than I am already.'

'The sight of that young man,' the Poet continued, getting up again restlessly, 'has brought back the memory of the old life. Why? I do not know. It forces itself upon me now and then unbidden. The old life among the wits and the poets. We sat in Fleet Street Taverns—there were the Cock and the Cheshire Cheese and the Rainbow and the Mitre and Dick's—over port and whisky punch—Dickens used to make gin punch, I remember—and we talked till the small hours: and such talk! I suppose they sit there still to drink and talk! But most of them must be dead. Thirty years ago! Thackeray and Dickens and—oh! I knew them all—I knew them. I sat in familiar intercourse with them all. There were Charles Reade, Mark Lemon, Shirley Brooks, Albert Smith, Bulwer Lytton, Monckton Milnes, Douglas Jerrold—I cannot remember all their names. Where are they all now? It was a glorious time.

And I was with them and one of them. And yet they suffered me—these my friends suffered me—to be driven out through jealousy and spite. Well: it is long ago now, and an old story. Althea, I am restless this evening.' He shivered as one that hath a fever upon him. 'I feel as if something was impending. I feel as if I must go back to those taverns and be welcomed by my old friends in the time of triumph.—I am disturbed.—Something is going to happen.'

'O father!—all because a young gentleman looked at you?'

'Something, my dear,' he repeated obstinately, 'is certainly going to happen.' He sat down again and took up his pipe as if he would show how a true Philosopher should confront any fate.

It was, if you consider it, a safe thing to prophesy because the word 'something' covers a large area and may be interpreted in many ways, as, for instance, a disappointment with a breakfast egg at one end of things, or an earthquake at the other end. In this case the Prophet was justified by the event because something did happen. The street door was opened and slammed and voices were heard in the Hall. Althea started. One of them was the voice of their new acquaintance—the very stranger from Australia of whom they had been talking. Althea started, because a visit from a new acquaintance was an absolutely unique event in her experience. She was now nineteen years of age. Not once during her whole life had she ever before known the arrival of a stranger. Their family circle was never broken. Oliver, before he went to Germany and was still at St. Olave's School, brought no boys home to Bank Side: the Cottle girls ran in and out as they pleased: but no visitor ever called.

'Clement,' said the Doctor cheerily, 'I have brought a young gentleman from Australia who desires the honour of your acquaintance.'

'The great honour,' said this stranger.

Mr. Indagine bowed coldly—such tribute to a poet must be received as of everyday occurrence: but then his natural goodness of heart came back to him and he held out his hand.

'I am very pleased, Sir,' he said, 'to receive you. We live retired and—and in fact—we see few visitors. You have come from Australia'—it was not in human nature to refrain from one look of triumph in the direction of his daughter—'all the way from Australia in order to obtain this introduction?'

'It was one of the reasons of my journey,' said the young man with truth.

'And what, Sir,' asked Mr. Indagine, 'does the Australian—the Antilpoda world—say now of the attack—the ferocious and unprecedented attack—which drove me out of human society?'

'Ah!' the Doctor echoed, 'what do they say now?'

Why—really'—Laurence showed a momentary confusion—

'we are a young people and have hardly yet begun to discuss things literary. Among those, however, who know the circumstances, there is but one opinion.'

'There can be but one opinion,' said the Doctor.

The Poet bowed. 'It is gratifying to find the world convinced at last. And which, Sir, of the poems is your own especial favourite?'

'I have no favourite,' Laurence replied hastily and avoiding Althea's eyes which were turned upon him, expectant. 'Do not question me about your poems, Sir, or I may be led to speak in your presence too warmly.'

'Nay, nay'—Mr. Indagine actually laughed—when had Althea seen him laugh before? 'Well: you may respect the modesty of an author, young gentleman, in his presence: but—outside—outside—say all you think and feel—freely. Now let us talk. Althea, my dear, play something softly. Gentle music encourages ideas.'

The chess-board was neglected: the pipe was laid down: and the Man of Letters appeared. Mr. Indagine talked.

When people live together a great deal they leave off talking unless something unexpected happens, or unless, which is not uncommon, they belong to that social level which is perpetually occupied with the behaviour of the brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces and sisters-in-law. That behaviour, which is always such as could never have been expected, furnishes a topic which endures throughout the longest life, is always fresh and is always interesting. But in this circle there were no near relations whose conduct could be discussed. Mr. Indagine had married the Doctor's only sister, who was dead: and his own brother had long since gone away and disappeared. It will, therefore, be understood that these two elderly gentlemen had for many years ceased to talk much. Therefore it was as if the Poet should break out in a new line when he began to discourse upon literature.

It was also as if he were letting free a flood long dammed up. Or as if he were pouring out of a vessel full to the brim and overflowing: or as if he had been waiting all these years for a sympathetic listener. The Doctor, in fact, was not possessed of the literary mind.

Althea meanwhile continued to play: it was old music—Weber's Last Waltz—one of the Songs without Words—music that flowed softly and filled the mind with peace and made the imagination as wax to be moulded by the speaker. The Australian disciple, to whom the discussion was addressed, listened to the Sage with great deference, occasionally inclining his head in order to show that his attention was riveted and that he did not mean to lose one single word.

The discourse was remarkable not only because it turned wholly upon the Literature of the Fifties—any essayist might have done the same thing—but because it spoke of these works as if they were the newest things out, and because the speaker employed in illustrating his points the echoes of that time. The great books of the Fifties include 'In Memoriam,' 'David Copperfield,' 'Esmond,' 'The Woman in White,' 'Adam Bede,' 'Cranford,' 'Christie Johnston,' and 'Hypatia,' among many others. This Decade hath, forsooth, a goodly record. Yet it must be owned that between the current ideas of '88 and those of '58 there is a gulf of more than thirty years. To listen to the old man whitehaired, eloquent, who ignored all that had been done since the latter date, caused a curious and not unpleasant sensation. Laurence began pleasantly to feel as if he were himself transported back to the Fifties and was sitting in judgment not upon his ancestors but upon his contemporaries. He was at the Tavern, in the circle of the very men themselves. Thackeray came in and went out: Douglas Jerrold said a good thing full of impudence: Dickens looked in and laughed: the night was young and the circle was full. The presence of the girl sitting beside him on her music-stool did not interfere with this Vision of the Past—One who falls into such a Vision sees through solid bodies, dresses, furniture, and the like. If Ghosts are transparent, so also are solid things when Ghosts are behind them. If the Poet could so charm them with speech alone, what could he not do if he were to begin to sing?

In the middle of the talk, the other young man, Oliver, opened the door and stole quietly in. He looked extremely surprised at the sight of the visitor and sat down in silence. But the magician had no power over Oliver. He remained in the Present, and looked on with eyes which betrayed boredom and lack of interest.

At last the talker ran down. Then they all came back to the Present again, and sat no longer at the Garrick Club or in Cock or Rainbow Tavern, but in the little room of the house in New Thames Street which leadeth off Bank Side.

'We will talk again, young gentleman,' said Mr. Indagine, in conclusion. 'Your views are sound and your observations show reading and grasp.' Laurence had not uttered one word. 'Come again and come often while you stay in London. It is pleasing and novel to learn the literary and poetical attitude of Australia. There is not in this civilised part of London one single Club or Tavern at which a man may hope to find a scholar or a poet. Yet the taverns still stand in which Shakespeare and his friends caroused near the Globe and the Rose. There is not here even a second-hand book shop.'

'He must not go yet,' cried the Doctor. 'What? Has

Bank Side no hospitality? Althea, my dear, Mr. Waller will take——'

This is an age of Apollinaris water. Therefore, one must refrain from explaining what it was that Laurence was offered and what he accepted. Suffice it to say that the Poet took some and the Doctor too, and that Laurence took tobacco with it, and that it was in a big glass and sparkled if held up to the light. The Poet relapsed into silence, but he sat with a benignant smile, and he suffered, without a murmur, the conversation to run on quite modern topics and things of local interest.

Then Laurence spoke of Bank Side and of the people he had already met, especially the interesting family of the Cottles. And then, looking furtively at the Poet, he launched a question. It was a question even more closely connected with his visit than the immortal poems.

'There was once,' he said slowly, 'a certain Mr. Norbery living near here. Did you know anything of him?' He addressed the Doctor, but he looked, as has been said, towards the Poet.

This innocent question fell into the circle like a bomb-shell.

Mr. Indagine started violently and his face became a deep crimson. The Doctor also started and looked at his brother-in-law as if curious to see how he would take it. And Althea laid her hand upon her father as if to soothe and restrain him. And Oliver looked suspicious. What had he done?

'He is dead. Mr. Norbery is dead,' said the Doctor. 'He died five years ago. Let us not talk about him.'

'He was a bad man.' Mr. Indagine sat up with a sudden change of manner as if stung into rage. 'A hard, cruel man——'

'Yes, father, yes. But he is dead,' said Althea, patting his hand.

'Is he dead? Let his name be never mentioned in my hearing.'

'I am truly sorry,' said Laurence, 'that I did mention it.'

'Is he dead?' Mr. Indagine repeated. 'I have never cared to ask whether he was alive or dead. If he is dead and can do no more harm, so much the better for the world. Let us all forget his name as speedily as may be.'

'Why—' thought Laurence, 'they actually know nothing!' But Oliver looked at him with suspicion from the black penthouse of his thick eyebrows.

But Mr. Indagine's wrath died out like a fire of shavings, and he settled himself again in his chair.

'Say no more, young gentleman. Say no more. You have helped me to a pleasant evening. You have brought me a laurel from Australia. I should not be human if I were not gratified.

Come often and talk with me. We will not speak of ignoble people—but of the Muses and their favourites. We will wander among the asphodels of Parnassus. Good night, Sir,' he grasped Laurence's hand warmly. 'Good night, my dear Sir—come again—come often.'

CHAPTER II.

FAIR FRIENDSHIP.

Once more Althea stood at the head of the Stairs, dressed for the river in a straw hat and a loose jacket that left her arms free. The boat was rocking with the swell of the tide at her feet: beside her stood her new acquaintance, Mr. Laurence Waller.

'If you would really like to come with me,' she said. 'I generally go alone: but if you are sure that you would like——'

'I should like nothing better,' he replied. 'Let me take the sculls and you shall steer and tell me about the river as we go. Remember that I have never been on it yet.'

It was Saturday afternoon, a little after two. Work was knocked off: the men had ceased to run up and down the planks with their baskets of broken glass or their loads of scrap iron: the great gates of the wharves were closed: the barges were left alone with their cargoes until Monday. A Sabbath calm already prevailed upon the Bank.

Althea ran down the steps and took her place in the stern, while her companion followed and untied the painter and shoved off. Such progress in Fair Friendship may be made in two or three days by a careful young man who takes pains: such are the prizes awarded to such young men as deserve them: and so great was the gratitude felt by this young lady towards the man who had come all the way from Australia to gaze upon her father.

The day was bright: a fresh breeze crisped and curled the water into little dancing waves: it drove the light clouds across the sky and caused the flying shadows to chase each other over the broad surface of the river: it made Althea's cheek to glow and her eyes to brighten. Eyes more beautiful: cheek more glowing: Laurence thought he had never seen.

He addressed himself, at first, to getting out from the rows of barges into mid-stream and to showing the young lady that an Australian, as well as a Thames waterman, may know how to feather his oars with ease and dexterity. Now a girl's ad-

miration of ease and dexterity in any art is in direct proportion to her own knowledge of that art; so that Althea, who understood good rowing, was quick to appreciate the neatness with which her companion handled the sculls. She was also, during the half-hour that followed, enabled to recognise strength of muscle and length of wind. This young man could not only row but he could last.

They went up stream with the slack end of the flowing tide as far as Chelsea Reach, which is a good long pull. Althea was silent at first, but presently began to beguile the way by pointing out the places, houses, churches, bridges, and palaces as they passed. She talked with more courage when she perceived that her companion listened with the greatest interest—indeed her short experience of him had already distinguished him as a young man of sympathetic manner. She found him far more ready to listen than to talk. There is a kind of young man who, in presence of a girl, is tempted to put on side, to walk round and show his muscles, to swagger and crow, and in other ways to imitate the male turkey, for purposes of mashing. There is another kind—a much more subtle and dangerous young man—who sits in humility, contented to listen in silence and to encourage the girl. Laurence belonged to this kind of young man. In the middle of Chelsea Reach he stopped, obedient to the Captain of the ship, and turned her bows. Then they both fell into silence gazing upon the river. And presently Laurence remarked that the smile had died out upon Althea's lips; that her face was become grave: and that her eyes were dreamy. She looked as one carried away in a vision.

Chelsea Reach is never crowded with boats: at three o'clock even on a Saturday in June it is too early for the London Clubs, but there were on the water one or two scullers in the light craft which seem so easy to be pulled through the water that one wonders how it is they can cause the rower to pant and puff, his face to flush: his brow to stream, his manly chest to heave and his arms to quiver just as much as if he were tugging at the oar of the accursed galley of Algiers or the biggest barge of Bank Side. There were no penny steamboats visible: as for canoes, randans, pleasure boats, and steam launches, one does not expect them lower down than Putney. There were two or three barges just beginning to drop down stream, blundering and staggering, with the tide: and there was a noisy little tug, all engine and paddle-wheels, which hauled and lugged along a team of unwilling lighters each with one man on board labouring like ten men to keep her bows straight and her stern clear.

Five minutes passed—ten minutes: but the girl remained silent and motionless: her thoughts far away. What was she thinking of? The stillness of her face suited her beauty: a

really sweet face seems to look best with a certain gravity upon it. She sat as motionless as if she had been in a trance.

Laurence dipped the sculls and pulled a short stroke. The girl started and sat upright.

'I have been dreaming, I am afraid,' she said.

'I think you have. Do you often fall a-dreaming?'

'Yes—very often. When one is quite alone, you know—at home when my father is in his study and my uncle is out with his patients: and on the river when I am by myself—it is so easy to fall into dreams.'

'If I could ask you to tell me your dreams, I might interpret them for you, perhaps.'

'They are not worth telling. Are you very tired? Shall I change places with you?'

'I am not in the least tired, thank you. The river is splendid. I am truly grateful to you for letting me come with you—what a blessed chance that I have remained at Bank Side!'

'My father was afraid that you would think it such a poor place—and go away. Cassie said she would give you two days. We who always live there, you see, hardly understand how poor the place must look to a stranger.'

'Well—Bank Side, it is true, does look best with a little gilding of sunset upon it. But there is the river.'

'Yes—there is the river—the river.' She leaned forward as if to see better the stretch of water around her. 'The river'—the words seemed to have a magnetic effect: her eyes again assumed the look of one whose thoughts are far away: her voice fell into a murmur and she spoke as if she was talking to herself without thinking of her companion. 'The river! It is always changing: sometimes it laughs as if it thought of nothing but happiness and enjoyment: and sometimes it rolls along grey and heavy as if it were thinking of the poor people along the shores who are so miserable and so wicked: and sometimes it is as blue as the sky and sometimes it is the colour of mud. But every day the water rolls up and then rolls down again—every day—so full—so full of strength. We stand upon the bank and watch: ten thousand years ago the tide rolled up and down, and it will go on thousands and thousands of years after we are dead.'

'When we are no longer standing on the shore,' said Laurence, 'the river may do just exactly what it pleases. Let us be happy with the present.'

Youth, I suppose he meant, has nothing to do with the past or with the future; of tenses, the present alone belongs to youth. Of moods, the indicative and the imperative are meant for the use of youth. For age there are the optative and subjunctive among moods, and the past and future—I mean the Prophetic

Future—among tenses. They bestow upon that chilly period of life either its chief consolations or its bitterest pangs. I am sorry that Vicesimus Cottle did not say this. As a grammarian he would have been pleased with the illustration. Unfortunately, it never occurred to him.

Althea went on as if he had not spoken.

'It is the tide which gives life to the river. If it were not for the tide there would be a stream always flowing down. To stand on the bank and watch the current always always running away without any rest or pause—to think that it goes on running all the night as well as all the day: coming one knows not whence and running one knows not whither, must fill the soul with a kind of terror as if, like time, it was always carrying something away from us. But the ebb and the flow—it is as if the river came to help us every day.'

'It does,' said Laurence. 'The tide was first turned on when barges were invented.'

Althea looked up and laughed. She was shaken out of her thoughts and called back to companionship again. Her eyes lost their dreamy look, and she sat upright and caught the strings as if she meant to attend to business.

'You must not mind my idle talk,' she said. 'I come upon the river so much and I am alone for such long hours that I sometimes talk out loud the things that are in my head.'

'No—no—go on talking. I will listen.'

'Well then—I am glad that you like the river and I am glad that your first introduction to the river has been in sunshine.'

'We have plenty of sunshine in Sydney,' said Laurence, 'and we like it. They told me that London is the city of Perpetual Fog. Yet behold!'

'We do have fogs,' Althea confessed. 'That cannot be denied. But to-day I am sure no sky could be brighter—not even the sky of Sydney.'

'That is quite true,' he replied.

'And no air finer.'

'Again, quite true.'

'And I own that the sun does make a very great difference. Look at that big lighter blundering along in the mid-stream. You would almost think that it was a live thing, a hippopotamus or something—rejoicing in her clumsy play. And look at that noisy little tug, how she pulls along the team of barges as if they weighed nothing, and it was a joy and pride for the little creature to put forth her strength. Well—on a cloudy day the big lighter would fill you with pity because it would seem so blind and helpless. And the tug would make you think of a slave writhing under the lash.'

'Yes,' he said. There was no need to say more than just to show that he was listening.

'Sometimes the clouds close over and the rain falls. Then one sees nothing: the banks are hidden: the barges and boats vanish: one is all alone on the water, and the rain beats on the river as if it were lashing and scourging it. Then one trembles and thinks of terrible things. I have a dream which comes to me often, of being all alone on a waste of waters with nothing visible and the rain beating down. Or one may be caught in a fog. Then the only thing is to keep close in shore and so to creep home. But the fog is not so terrible as the dark cloud and the pelting lashing rain. Once there fell a thunderstorm upon the river when I was upon it. The lightning played over the waters, and a great ball of fire burst close to the boat. I thought that the boat and I together might be struck and suddenly destroyed and no one would ever know what had become of me. And I wondered how many people in this great world would ask the question. Half a dozen in all. It is not many to know out of all the millions.'

'Not many,' Laurence echoed with a little doubt in his mind as to the healthiness of this solitary communing on the river.

Then she changed and again came back, so to speak, to life.

'You are a stranger,' she said, 'and I suppose you do not understand what the river has always been to London. Formerly it was the highway of the people. They did not go up and down the streets: they could not because they had no carriages and the roads were rough and there were no footpaths: they took boat and so went up and down the river at their ease —it must have been much more pleasant than an omnibus. I could show you where they landed at the old stairs all along the North bank from Westminster to Wapping. Then they had sports upon the river and Pageants, and all the gentlefolk had their own boats just as in Venice everybody has his gondola. The King had the Barge of State: the Lord Mayor had his Barge of State: the City Companies, the Bishops, the great Lords, all had their Barges of State; and went up and down the river in them. In those days swans swam about the stairs: salmon were caught above Bridge: people used to go angling in the river: the bank was lined with stately houses sloping down to the river's edge—' She sighed heavily. 'The river must have been beautiful in those days. I am sure there could not have been so much mud to begin with.'

'I believe the company in the boats was sometimes a little mixed,' Laurence objected, timidly.

'Well, then. Think, even now, what the river is to the city, though we no longer use the boats. Think how it blows away the wasted air and brings up the fresh breeze with every tide'

'Yes,' said Laurence. 'I will try to think about it in this way.'

'And remember what beautiful things have been written about the river. But perhaps you do not read poetry.'

'I have read some poetry,' said Laurence. 'It is not quite the same thing.'

'If you had known the Thames so long as I—Have you read Spenser? He, you know—

> Walked forth to ease his pain
> Along the shore of silver-streaming Thames:
> Whose rutty bank, the which his river hems,
> Was painted all with variable flowers
> And all his meades adorned with dainty gems
> Fit to deck maidens' brows.'

'I have heard those lines.'

'Then can you tell me who wrote—

> May all clean nymphs and curious water dames
> With swan-like state float up and down thy streams—?

No? It was Herrick. You ought to know Herrick. And Pope has written about the river—and—and—oh! many other poets.'

Laurence made haste to change the subject. He might have been examined in Mr. Indagine's immortal verse: in which case a disgraceful pluck awaited him.

'You are not afraid of rowing about alone?'

'Not in the least. There is nothing to fear. You can easily keep out of the way of the barges and the steamers. Out on the river you are quite free. I come here every day—it is always fine some part of the day—if only for half an hour. At home there are mean streets everywhere and men who get drunk and beat their wives: how can one walk for pleasure in those streets? On the river there is nothing mean and ugly and vulgar, though I confess that some of the buildings on the banks might be more picturesque. And then one is quite alone, and if you row up above Westminster you are quiet. You can think in peace. If one is in good spirits it is happiness enough only to row along singing—and if you feel low the fresh air and the exercise quickly bring you back to a cheerful mind.'

'And always alone?'

'Always in the day. Sometimes, in the evening, Cassie or Felix will come with me. But Felix rows in a Club Four, and despises my poor little boat.'

'Then sometimes, I suppose, you land and look about.'

'Oh! no.' Althea shook her head. 'That would spoil all. I should only find modern streets. As it is, the banks are crowded with the old things that I have read of in the books about London. Quantities of things happen up and down the river. When I am rowing along I can amuse myself with bringing back the people and their houses and gardens. I should be sorry, indeed, to land

and find the old houses and the gardens gone and only mean streets in their places.'

'You live in a dead and gone London,' said Laurence. 'Has the living London no attraction for you?'

'I do not know it. But the dead and gone London lives still. Nothing ever really dies, I have read, except the memory of wickedness. For instance, there is Battersea Park—before you—behind that Terrace.'

'Oh! Battersea Park? St. James's Park I know and Hyde Park.'

'This is Battersea Park. I dare say if we were to land there we should find a place like Southwark Park. Twenty or thirty years ago I believe it was only a dismal stretch of bare fields where people came to shoot pigeons and to make dogs fight and catch rats. That must have been a dreary time. But I forget that and remember a time much older, when Lord Bolingbroke lived here and had a great House with gardens down to the river bank. There was a Terrace there, and he used to walk up and down with his friends. Oh! I often see them when I—fall a-dreaming, as you say—Pope and Steele and Addison and Swift and Arbuthnot—I see them all. They walk up and down slowly in little companies of twos and threes, carrying their hats under their arms and stepping daintily in shoes and white silk stockings. I wish I could hear what they say, but that I can never do: and it would be bad manners to pull nearer the bank in order to listen, would it not?'

'Clearly. Addison himself in one of his papers reproaches young ladies in boats for listening to private conversation. If you see any of these good people this afternoon, tell me, will you? But I believe I must be short-sighted in the matter of ghosts.'

'I will tell you,' the girl replied gravely. 'But they only come when I am alone. On the other side—over there—Sir Thomas More lives: he has got a beautiful house built of red brick with delightful casement windows: it is covered with ivy cut and trimmed close and clinging round the stone mullions: he walks in his garden, which is full of apple and mulberry trees and standard roses, with his daughter Margaret. He has the kindest and wisest face in all the world. But I have not seen him lately. Lower down there was formerly a big Botanic Garden. I believe they have covered it with houses now, but I often meet the Physicians in their boats going to see the simples growing under glass. Every day in summer they go there, and I believe they drink wine together in a tavern after their visit. Nobody now looks so wise as the last century Physicians with their black velvet coats, their high peaked wigs and their gold-headed walking canes. They are so full of wisdom and dignity that they must have been able to cure every disease under the sun.'

'Are there any on the river at this moment?'

'No—You have driven them away, they can only be seen by solitary persons. Chelsea is very rich in beautiful places. There is Ranelagh over there. It is a lovely place: there is a great round room in it for music and dancing lit by thousands of oil lamps, and there are gardens where the people walk about, the ladies in hoops and patches and the men with swords and purple coats. Sometimes I meet barges, not our great lumbering Bank Side barges—but beautiful pleasure boats with music in the bows and the company in the stern, rowing up to Chelsea for a night at Ranelagh.'

'Alas!' said Laurence, looking up and down the river and then across it and shading his eyes so that the sun should not hide their vision. 'I see nothing, not even Lord Bolingbroke on the Terrace.'

'Would you know him if you did see him?'

'N—no—I think not. I might suspect, you know. Perhaps that is the reason why I see nothing.'

'It is pleasant to imagine all these things,' said Althea, looking at him gravely. 'They become quite real if you imagine them often. We have got the old books at home—the essays, and poems, and plays—and I have read them all, and it seems sometimes as if the life of the last century was the only life worth having, and ours was a mere existence to read about the past.'

'Why,' said Laurence, 'if that is all you have of life—to read about the past——'

'But you—who know the world—don't you think that the world of the last century must have been ten times as pleasant as it is now?'

'No, Miss Indagine. I believe, on the other hand, that we have got the very best of everything.'

'But in the old days there were assemblies and dances and water-parties and all kinds of things.'

'Well—but——' Laurence looked up surprised, 'isn't there plenty of dancing and music and singing still? There are the Theatres—did they act better then than they do now? Did they dance better? Did they sing better? Were the ladies more beautiful or the men more polished? I doubt it very much. I am quite satisfied, Miss Indagine, with the present.'

'Yes—perhaps,' she said doubtfully. Then she laughed a little. 'Oh! of course it is as you say, only it seems I should have seen something of this life if I had lived a hundred years ago. None of these things come to Bank Side, and I have come to believe that they exist no longer. The world of Society——' she looked across the river to the steeples and towers of the West —'it is over there somewhere—I should like to see it just for

once. I can picture the life of the last century, but not the life of the present.'

'But surely you do not stay always at Bank Side. Surely, you go, sometimes, somewhere, away from the—the place——' he looked as if he was suppressing something—an adjective perhaps.

'No, I never leave Bank Side.'

'You never leave—you never go away at all?'

'No—and no one ever comes to us. We are hermits—my father and Dr. Luttrel and I, we three together. Oliver used to come for his vacations: but he never liked the place, and, to be sure, the streets all round us are very mean. Since he came back from Germany he only comes occasionally.'

'Is his mind wholly given up to science?' asked Laurence. Then he remembered the comedietta of the Bridge and wished he had not asked the question.

Althea changed colour. Then she made answer in a constrained voice. 'I cannot say how Oliver disposes of his mind. He gives his father very little of his society. I mean only that we live a very retired life and are wholly ignorant of society. When you are tired of us,'—she said this with a perfect absence of coquetry,—'you will go away and forget us and we shall go on again in the old quiet way. Until you do get tired of us, come and talk with my father as often as you can. He likes you—and it is long since he talked with any one of the outside world. For thirty years he has lived apart from his fellows.'

'Tired of you?' cried Laurence—but checked himself. Could one believe that there was a hermit—a girl hermit—living under the shadow of St. Paul's? But to think—no society at all! 'Tell me,' a sudden thought seizing him, 'tell me is it possible that you have never been to a dance?'

'It is quite possible. I do not in the least know how people dance; only I am sure that the minuet has quite gone out.'

'Nor to a Theatre? Nor to a party of any kind?'

'I have been nowhere. We have no friends—no one visits us—and the only girls I know are Cassie and Flavia.'

'Good Heavens! What do you do every day and all day?'

'I read and work—I go out in my boat—I play a little—I work a little. That is all. It is not so dull as you would think, but sometimes I wonder what it is like in the world.'

'Then in the summer. You don't stay at Bank Side in the summer?'

'Yes, we do. We have very little money, you know. My father has the house in which we live and three or four more. It is all we have got to live upon, and my Uncle's practice is all among the poor people. If we were only rich——'

'Why,' Laurence longed to tell her, 'you *are* rich: you are

very rich indeed. You have got an immense estate waiting for you.' But he refrained. The time was not yet come.

'You live in London and yet you do not know London.'

'Oh, yes, I do. I know the City of London very well and I know the Borough; as for the City, I am sure there cannot be, anywhere, a more delightful place. We have got books about the City—Cunningham and Timbs and others—and I read all that has happened in the streets and then walk about them and remember it all. Saturday afternoon is a good time because the Churches are generally open and the streets are quiet. But Sunday morning is best because the streets are quite empty and deserted. Oh! You must not think that I do not know London.'

'Miss Indagine,' said Laurence after a little pause, 'I propose an exchange.'

'What is it?'

'One to my own advantage entirely. Show me these curious places in the City and the Borough, and I will show you the West End. I have walked once down Regent Street and Bond Street and Piccadilly and I seem to know the West End right through. I have also looked in at the Academy. What do you say?'

Althea hesitated with caution newly born. It is by instinct that we suspect a snake in the grass. Yet she knew nothing about the designs of the Male Heart Breaker, of the Designer, of the Man with no Intentions, of the mere Amuser, or of the Catholic Admirer. Man the Tippler she knew, because she frequently met him in the streets, but Man the Designer she knew not. Yet she instinctively hesitated. But the eyes which met hers were so frank and honest that she yielded.

'You will show me the World of Society and Pleasure?'

'I cannot take you into the actual houses or to their dances and parties. But I can show you the outside of things, if you please.'

'Yes, I should like to see the outside of things. I accept the exchange.'

'Very good, and now we are off Bank Side. Poor old Bank Side! It really does want a little gilding of the sunset. And it is Saturday afternoon. Let us begin at once. You shall take me to the City of Ghosts and Shadows; you shall show me the old merchants in their wigs and lace ruffles, and I will show you the young gentlemen in their tight collars and their pointed boots. I am *very* glad, Miss Indagine,' as she sprang out of the boat and ran up the stairs. 'I am very glad that I stayed at Bank Side. Why, I might have been wasting my time at the Grand Hotel, wandering about Piccadilly looking at the fine ladies, or even sitting in the stalls of the Theatres, looking at the play.'

CHAPTER III.

POET AND PLAYER LAND.

Here beginneth the first of many lessons. Here followeth the first of many rambles.

To him who walks abroad in London with his eyes open there are no streets—not even those of Florence and Rome—fuller of instruction and delight. But while even the most ignorant tourist gets all that his unhistorical soul can absorb—which is not much—out of the Florentine streets by diligent study of his Horner, few indeed of those who daily go up and down the London streets regard their antiquity or heed their history of a thousand years. Yet in those streets has been enacted a long drama in many acts and countless tableaux, with incidents and situations of surpassing interest, by a people incomparably more worthy than the Italians. If you see, as you may occasionally, a little party wandering about, curiously poking and prying into odd corners, armed with Baedeker or Hare, wanting to get into closed Churches and asking where are ancient monuments which have been swept away by greed and avarice—they are sure to be Americans. They cannot walk so well as the English, and pilgrimising is therefore a weariness to the flesh. Yet they continue to go on pilgrimage. Of English pilgrims to the sacred shrines and holy sites of London Town there are none.

Perhaps, if there were guides, there would be pilgrims. A cicerone who can speak is far, far more useful than one who is only read. First of all, he knows his way and does not have to ask it constantly, and does not cause one to weep in wrong places, which is humiliating. If, for instance, there were guides like unto Althea, there certainly would flock unto the City a noble army of pilgrims, young, enthusiastic, athirst for knowledge. But there are none like unto her. And, which is the more to be deplored, she herself has now retired from the profession in which she was once so distinguished an amateur. Circumstances over which she has had positively no control have removed her from the Borough of Southwark. There is a vacancy. In these days of feminine competition, certain people have discovered that the calling of Cicerone might be found lucrative to those ladies who would take the trouble of acquiring City history and archæology. None but the resolute should attempt this branch of knowledge, which demands, to begin with, a vast amount of reading and a tenacious memory in order

to acquire the necessary equipment. None, again, but the sturdy and the strong-backed should attempt to practise this profession. That young lady who cannot do her ten miles of street tramp without fatigue; who cannot bear the jolting of a cab all day long without getting a pain in the back; who has to lie down with a headache after lecturing in the streets for half a day,—had better think of some more sedentary occupation. City Cicerone: Parties personally conducted: Lectures given on the kerb: the oral history of the London streets: the wondrous tale of Church and College, of street and square, of court and alley, of river side and ancient wall, of merchant princes and stately companies—a splendid vista opens before one. I see the guide, young, strong, and—yes, surely—beautiful, bright-eyed, enthusiastic, followed by her party of ignorant—humbly ignorant—West Enders or Americans, sallying forth to extend their knowledge and her own income: to inculcate in them respect for antiquity and to pocket for herself substantial fees: to make dumb stones speak to them and to enable herself to keep her brothers at home in the idleness due to their position as gentlemen.

'Well,' said Althea, the only, the original pioneer of this profession of the future, 'we will begin with this side of the river if you will put yourself in my hands. I wonder if you know the memories of the ground. This—for instance, is Poet and Player Land.'

'My mind is as a tablet of virgin wax,' said Laurence. 'I only know that all this city is full of history. Deal with me as you think fit.'

Althea considered a moment gravely, as if impressed with the responsibility of her task, and then led the way to the west end of Bank Side, where, beside the wharf with its mountain of petroleum casks, it melts and merges into Willow Street, where now no willows be this many and many a year.

'Now,' she said, holding up a finger monitory. 'You see, I suppose, a narrow street with warehouses and wharves—nothing else.

'Nothing else, except two lamp-posts.'

'Very well. It is no use—no use at all—going any farther unless you are able to shut your eyes to everything that stands upon this ground. You must make believe, Mr. Waller. Oh! if one could not make believe every day, it would be difficult indeed to live here.'

'I will make believe, then, most obediently. Only tell me what I am to see.'

'Nothing very difficult. But first of all these streets and houses must vanish.'

'That is indeed easy. See! Presto!' He waved his hand.

'It is done. They are gone. There are no more streets and houses. But for the moment there is nothing else. The human eye, Miss Indagine, abhors vacuity. What should I see?'

'Instead of mean streets there are beautiful gardens, leafy trees, grassy lanes, flowery hedges, and ponds.'

'Certainly. Stupid of me not to see them before. They are here—gardens full of flowers and the most umbrageous trees in the world.'

It was clear from the rapt look in Althea's eyes that to her the gardens and hedges were really there. But it must be confessed that her companion departed from the truth.

'We have gone back nearly three hundred years,' said Althea, 'we are in the year 1600 and in Queen Elizabeth's reign. That, of course, you can see for yourself, by the way that the people are dressed.'

'Of course one recognises the costume.' Laurence looked about him critically. 'It is picturesque. I think I have never seen it before off the stage.'

'We are ghosts: we wander unseen among them: we can talk and they will not hear us: we can watch them but they will not notice us. Oh! we shall have the most delightful walk. I have often and often been among them before, but always alone. It is stupid not to have anyone to talk with on such a walk, is it not?'

'Do you never talk with the people?'

'No,' she replied, as gravely as a child pretending; 'I am invisible, you know. Let us begin. See, now, this is Love Lane.'

Laurence looked down a dark passage with high buildings on either side, so narrow that there was hardly room for two men to pass each other.

'There is always a Love Lane or a Lovers' Walk in every place where there are open fields near a town. You are very lucky to visit the place in June. See how bright the hedge is with the wild roses: and look at the flowers above the ditch. It is pleasant to walk along this lane in nearly all weathers, except the depth of winter: but especially, now, in the early summer, and at evening, when the people on the Bank are beginning to be noisy over their cups and their songs. Listen! you can hear them tinkling their guitars. Some of them play and sing very sweetly—their songs are all about love and Venus—but you know they are mostly players and poets, and they drink and sing and quarrel every evening. Only a little while ago—five or six years now—they killed poor Christopher Marlow in a tavern brawl—you remember Christopher Marlow?'

'Perfectly. Perfectly.'

'I have often seen him on the Bank. He was a handsome

man not yet thirty, but he drank too much wine and he showed at times a wild and disordered countenance. I used to meet him when I was a little girl, and before that fatal quarrel, in these very lanes. He would walk along tossing his arms and spouting his splendid verses, thinking that he was all alone, because of course he could not tell that a girl of the nineteenth century was watching, could he?'

'Naturally he could not.'

'Then they killed him. I was very sorry. They ought to have buried him in St. Saviour's where so many of his old friends were to lie, but instead of that, they took him all the way to St. Nicholas', Deptford—I have always thought it such a pity that our own Church could not have the keeping of his remains.'

'So have I,' said Laurence.

'Behind us are the Falcon stairs and the Falcon Inn. Very good company used to land at those stairs and take a cup at the Inn on their way to Paris Gardens—great Lords and foreign ambassadors in their state barges. Those are the Paris Gardens over the hedge—Love Lane runs along the West side of the gardens. Formerly there were many rustic walks among the trees, but since they have kept the bears here and since the Lord Mayor has sent his hounds to the place and the London butchers have brought their offal here, the gardens are no longer pleasant for the citizens. The walks are overgrown and the flower beds and lawns are neglected. And that is why the trees are grown so thick that you can see nothing through the branches. We will not go into the gardens to-day, I think. What with the baiting of the bears and the bulls and the horses, there is generally such a rabble as would disgust you.'

'No,' said Laurence. 'Bears and bulls are rough company for ladies. I will go alone some other time. Let us go on.'

They went to the end of Willow Lane and turned into Holland Street.

'If we were not in Queen Elizabeth's time,' said Althea regretfully, when they came opposite to the court of Hopton's Almshouses, 'I could show you a most interesting almshouse here. But of course it isn't yet built. In the time of Queen Elizabeth there were not many almshouses. I could also show you Zoar Street where John Bunyan preached—but he has yet to be born. At present, you see, all is garden and wood. You are wondering, perhaps, to see so many ponds about. It is a great place for ponds and streams. The reason is that this part lies low: if it were not for the Bank it would be under water every high tide. I suppose that is also the reason why there is so much fever and ague about the place always. But here—here'—she turned into one of the meanest, dirtiest, ugliest streets possible to

conceive—'here we are at last really on the most classic ground in the whole of London. This, Mr. Waller, is, I assure you, none other than Maiden Lane!'

Laurence observed from the legend on the corner house that they had changed the name, but as his guide looked so triumphant he tried to look as if he understood all the glories of Maiden Lane.

'The modern houses have quite, quite vanished, have they not?' asked Althea, watching her companion's face with some anxiety. In fact, his eyes were palpably, obviously, considering the present appearance and the inhabitants of the street—which is now re-christened by order of some barbarian, and called Park Street. It is narrow and squalid: the houses are mean and dirty: the shops are those which belong to a very poor quarter: and there is continually, day and night, floating on the air, a thick, invisible cloud of smell. I know not how high it rises overhead, but at the elevation of five feet seven, where Laurence first struck it, the smell was as strong as Alcides, and as penetrating as the dart of Cupid. Laurence gasped, choked, and rushed through this bank of fragrance before he replied.

'Yes—yes—they have all quite vanished, I assure you. At that moment—when you spoke—there were, it is true, a few ghosts—mere shadows—of houses: and there seemed—perhaps my fancy—to be the faint ghost of a smell—very odd thing: I never met, before, with the ghost of a smell—fried fish it was—fish fried in oil—fish not quite fresh dipped in oil rather turned and then imperfectly fried—a very odd ghost.' Althea listened with some impatience. Such ghosts troubled her not: she was used to them. 'All gone now, Miss Indagine—even the ghost of the rag and bone shop, with the old woman, all rags and bones herself, in front. Nothing now but gardens and hedges and wild flowers and the—the—oh! Lord! that fried fish!—the sweetest fragrance from the wild roses and the honeysuckle. It is a balmy air. Only to breathe it is sufficient.'

'We are in Poet and Player Land,' said Althea, apparently satisfied. 'Some of the Poets and the Players lived on the Bank: they all came here to the Bank to sing and drink wine and smoke tobacco. But in these leafy lanes they walked together and held serious converse: they were not always drinking, you know. Here you may meet Shakespeare and Ben Jonson together. Beaumont comes here very often: he is a very fine gentleman who dresses like a courtier: and here walked Massinger and Ford: and I have seen Edmund Spenser here, but he is now dead. In the summer, when the theatres are open and the Bear Garden, the lanes are filled with people who have come across the river to see the play and the baiting: but indeed you can hear them.'

'It is indeed a beautiful place to walk in,' said Laurence,

doubtfully, because he thought he saw another ghost of a fried-fish shop a few doors ahead.

'Of course,' said Althea, 'this is the best time of the year for the lanes. In winter it is impossible to walk here for the mud. Besides, there is then almost always a white mist hanging over the place, and it is said to cause ague. This little cut across the fields is called Bandy Leg path. I know not why. This'—they were now at the end of the street where she herself lived—'is a way through the gardens to the riverside. Some day, perhaps,'—it was indeed a remarkable prophecy—'this path and all the lanes may be covered with mean buildings. Don't forget, pray, Mr. Waller'—for Laurence again showed a disposition to consider the houses—'that we are in the year 1600. You are only a Ghost of the Future.'

'Yes, yes, I remember—only a Ghost of the Future. It is a great power to be able to wander in the Past—mere Ghosts of the Future. How I pity those unfortunates who have to remain among the Present in the Flesh!' At that moment the Doctor emerged from the house and walked hastily up the street. But Althea seemed not to see him.

'Do you hear the drums and the trumpets?' she asked. 'What a noise! Why cannot they carry on their show without such a clamour? They are going to bait the bear in the new house—not in Paris Gardens. Look, there are Burleigh and Alleyne the players: and Henslowe with a great Lord. Look at his silk cloak embroidered with pearls. Let us follow.' She turned out of Maiden Lane into a narrow little street leading to the Bank. Halfway down the street widened into a tiny square with a tavern in one corner. 'This is the entrance to the new Bear Garden,' she said. 'It is the Hope Theatre as well. The Tavern is full of people drinking. Well, they will destroy and build over the Bear Garden, but the Tavern will remain. You don't want to see the baiting, do you?'

'No, unless you wish it.'

'Certainly not. It is a terribly noisy scene, and the men use horrid oaths. Besides, I have another surprise for you. You have heard of the Rose Theatre, of course?'

'Oh, yes! The Rose, of course.'

'There it is.' She pointed down another alley narrow and dark, parallel with the street of the Bear Garden.

'Oh! This is the Rose Theatre, is it?' Laurence gazed with interest at the wall of a warehouse. 'I never—do you know?—expected to look upon the Rose Theatre.'

'A little farther down I can show you something even more interesting.'

Just here the street passed under the arches of Southwark Bridge, but the Vision of the leafy lane remained in Althea's eyes.

A little beyond the Bridge begins the wall of the great Brewery. Althea stopped before this wall.

'There,' she said, 'is the Globe Theatre. It was only opened a year or two ago. Half a dozen of Shakespeare's plays have been already brought out here. It is the best and largest of all the Theatres. The old Swan in Paris Gardens is pulled down, I believe; but, as I told you, one cannot walk in those gardens any more, and I have not yet seen either the Curtain at Shoreditch, or the Theatre in the ruins of Blackfriars, or the Fortune at Cripplegate. The play they have acted to-day is the "Midsummer Night s Dream." It is a pity that we are too late for the performance.'

'It is a finely-proportioned house,' said Laurence, with the docility of the One-eyed Calendar.

'Yes. Pity to think,' said Althea, 'that this Theatre, which ought to be kept sacred to all time, will be presently deserted and the place left to itself for two hundred years. Then they will build Barclay and Perkins' Brewery upon it.'

'Barclay and Perkins!' cried Laurence, with more animation than he had shown for the Bear Garden or the Rose. 'Is this Barclay and Perkins'?'

'Oh! Mr. Waller! I thought the houses had all vanished.'

'But you brought them back, you know, by talking of Barclay and Perkins.'

'Well, let us leave off pretending. Have I made you understand a little where the old theatres stood?'

'I am ashamed of myself, Miss Indagine, for making believe so badly. But I do understand something, thank you.'

'Then for the rest of our walk we will be moderns again. This street'—it was that into which Maiden Lane ended—'used to be called Deadman's Place. There ought, properly, to be a legend about it—a murder and a ghost—and people should be afraid to walk alone in it at night: but now they have quite forgotten the story, even if ever there was one. This corner house is the place where the old Clink Prison stood—the Prison of the Liberty of the Clink—many a poor player has been laid by the heels in this prison for brawling. It still looks gloomy, though it is only a warehouse now; and this narrow street—Clink Street—was once a lane running along the north of Winchester House, the Bishop's Palace.'

At the end of the street they came upon the river and upon the queerest little dock that was ever seen, with just room enough for a barge to float in it.

'This is St. Mary Overies' Dock,' said Althea. 'It was made long ago for the brethren of the Priory. Perhaps, even, for the sisters of the old House founded by the Lady Mary long, long ago, even before London Bridge was built. They had a chapel here and looked after the Ferry. Very likely this Dock was one

end of the Ferry. The Sisters were followed by a college of Priests, who built a timber bridge. And then came two Norman knights, named Pont de l'Arche and Dauncey, who founded the Priory. The monks kept their barge of state laid up in this Dock, and the barges for the carriage of their wine and provisions put in here. The monastery stood here, at the back of the great church where are now nothing but warehouses. But only a few years ago there were still ruins left.'

By this time the Shakespearian vision had quite departed, and Althea was back again in the present day. She led her companion by another lane to the open space before the church. By a happy accident the doors were open and they went within.

It is wonderful to think of this great and splendid church lying buried and almost forgotten at the foot of London Bridge. They pulled down quite needlessly the stout old walls of the ruined nave, and they built up a Thing of ugliness and meanness in its place: they destroyed the Bishop's Chapel and would have destroyed the Lady Chapel as well, but they were prevented by the courage of one man. There are a hundred thousand who daily cross the Bridge and look down upon the church: from all the trains between Charing Cross and Cannon Street the passengers can look upon the Tower: yet, the whole day long, this splendid Chancel is quiet, untrodden by the feet of strangers, save by a few Americans who come over the river to see the place where the poets and players lie buried and where the martyrs were brought to hear their sentence, which was always that of death through the Gate of Fire. Why, even in the church itself, a glass screen divides the new nave from the Transept, and the scanty congregation know nothing of the glories of their old church.

Althea knew its history and all its monuments, and showed them, reading the inscriptions through like a conscientious Cicerone: the tomb of John Gower: the figure of the Templar, doubtless Pont de l'Arche himself: the figure of Lancelot Andrewes—father of all those who would read Mass for Morning Prayer: the names of Fletcher, Massinger, and Edmund Shakespeare carved in the stones of the chancel: the stalwart form of King James's Gentleman Porter: the recumbent Doctor, inventor of the Pill which cured most diseases and prevented all the rest—he is represented—nay, photographed—in the great suffering caused by taking one of his own Pills an hour or two before his demise: and the monument of Mr. Richard Humble, with the pretty lines,—

> Like to the damask rose you see,
> Or like the blossoms on the tree,
> Or like the dainty flowers of May,
> Or like the morning of the day,
> Or like the sun, or like the shade,
> Or like the gourd which Jonas had,
> Even so is Man whose thread is spun,
> Drawn out and cut and so is done.

'Are you tired?' Althea asked when they came out. 'Have you seen enough?'

'How can one ever be tired, with such a guide? You have taught me more in an hour than I could have learned in a month from the books. And all this——' he looked at Althea as he spoke, but perhaps he had the old sites in his mind—'all this—on Bank Side.'

'My father has got a collection of the old dramatists,' said Althea. 'By reading them and his books about London, of which he has a great many, it is easy to make out all these associations. If you like, I will take you, another day, into the City, where there are still a great many things to see, though none more interesting than these.'

'Let us go. Let us be ghosts again. I like being a ghost—in company. To be a ghost by oneself must be lonesome. Let us go somewhere else to-morrow.'

'For to-day,' said Althea, 'you shall not be a ghost any more. Another day—perhaps. Oh! there is a great deal more to see on this side of the river. There are the old Inns, but they can wait: there is Guy's Hospital: there is St. Olave's: there are Bermondsey, and Rotherhithe, and Deptford, and Greenwich—oh! quantities of places full of wonderful things—to those who can shut their eyes. But to-day I am going to show you only one more thing—very different from Poet and Player Land, if you will come with me.'

'I will go with you cheerfully, Miss Indagine, even to the South Pole.'

She took him up the stairs to the main street and turned southwards, and her face, which was as changeable as a field of golden corn in a day of cloud and wind, became strangely sad and grave.

'When I first read "Little Dorrit,"' she went on, breaking out in an unexpected place—from Shakespeare to 'Little Dorrit' is a considerable jump—'I understood the book far better than most people could. I am going to tell you why. Let me show you, first, all that is left of the place where Mr. Dorrit lived so long. When I read that book it was not of the girl I thought—the girl who was born in the Marshalsea and went in and out every day—it was of a boy who came to see his father and to watch the prisoners—a boy with bright eyes. See, this is the Marshalsea—all that is left of it.'

She led the way down a filthy and narrow passage to a paved court. A row of houses stood back to back: there were iron railings guarding a gateway and a gatehouse: the iron railings stood open and the gate was gone. Within, was another broad paved court with a high wall on one side. The upper windows looked out upon a churchyard with trees in it.

'This is the place,' said Althea. Laurence observed that for the actual place, the slattern women, the dirty children, the houses with their open doors, the bits of things drying after the wash—she had no eyes. She knew how to shut them. 'Here Mr. Dorrit lived. His room, I am certain, was up there, the second house from the end, where the windows command the best view of the trees in the churchyard. Two years ago I could have shown you the rest of the Prison: there was the old White Lyon, the ancient county Prison, what they used to call the Surrey Clink, still standing with its little exercise yard and its two great rooms—a real prison. But it is now all pulled down and built over. Don't you hear the chatter of the idle prisoners? Can't you see the boy—his name was Charles Dickens—looking and listening and forgetting nothing? Come away. It is dreadful to be here.'

They left the place of gloomy memories and walked a little way farther down the street. Presently Althea stopped and pointed to certain blocks of comparatively new houses across the road.

'Those new houses and streets,' she said, 'cover the site of the old Queen's Bench Prison. It has not been pulled down very long. Oh! I am glad it is gone. I am glad to think there is nothing left of it to preserve its memory. I hope it will be clean forgotten.' She spoke with more vehemence than was appropriate to a mere abstract dislike of a Prison. 'It is a hateful, dreadful place. Now I will tell you why I understood "Little Dorrit" so well. It is because my father passed his boyhood in this Prison. All that I read in that book, and more, I have heard from my father about this vile and wicked place. His father, my grandfather, died in that prison. There were three of them—my grandfather and his two boys; one of them, the younger, Æneas—a very little boy. My grandmother was dead. They were horribly poor, and their long poverty and the shame of the prison—it is a dreadful thing for a boy to have to confess that his father died in prison—and the sights and sounds of the place sank so deep into my father's heart that he has never forgotten them—or the man who caused all this suffering.'

'I knew something of this,' said Laurence.

'How did you know? Did Cassie tell you? Never mind. You think, Mr. Waller, that my father is absurdly sensitive; you wonder that a man should leave his friends and give up his work and retire to such a seclusion as Bank Side, all because he received a harsh and unjust criticism. But remember the poverty and the degradation of his boyhood passed in this prison. How he got educated at all I know not, because I cannot bear that his thoughts should ever be turned to that

miserable time. This it was which made him morbidly sensitive. He always remained afraid of the world. Some men do not seem to care a bit for the world: it never terrifies them. To my father the world seemed always so terribly strong: this came, perhaps, from living among men whom the world had crushed. I brought you here, Mr. Waller,' she added, looking up to him with her frank, clear eyes, 'because I wanted you to know exactly what happened to my father: I thought you would then make allowance for—for what you think is too sensitive in his character. I wanted this the more because my father likes you so much and because you may perhaps lead him a little out of his retirement. You know that you are the only man who has ever read and loved his poems.'

Laurence blushed, but made no reply.

They began to retrace their steps in silence. But Althea stopped before a great modern church in the High Street. Of the thousands who pass this church every day I wonder how many pay it any heed or know aught concerning it. Even St. Saviour's is better known.

'I must show you,' she said, 'the strangest churchyard in London. This is St. George's—the oldest Church in the Borough of Southwark. It is older than St. Saviour's, though the building is quite modern. This was a place of sanctuary, formerly. Southwark Fair used to be held here. But it is the churchyard that I want you to see. Let us go in. This is the burial-place of all the poor prisoners who died, during hundreds of years, in the Marshalsea and the Queen's Bench and the old White Lyon. Bishop Bonner is buried here: here are lords and great men as well as the humble and unknown who have died in the prisons and were brought here when—when the Lord granted their discharge. The poor prisoners! The place, before they left off burying here, was crammed with dead men's bones. The people in the Marshalsea—that is Mr. Dorrit's window above the wall—must have heard the knell ringing and watched the funerals going on every day. I don't think Little Dorrit noticed them very much. Oh! if one could only write a history of St. George's Churchyard—but the very names of the prisoners are long since forgotten—and their unjust sufferings and the punishment for their sins—all gone out of men's minds. Among the company of the dead prisoners, Mr. Waller, lies my grandfather.'

The churchyard of St. George's, like most of the London churchyards, has been turned into a public garden. They have cleared away the headstones and removed them to serve as a kind of lining to the walls, where they are neatly arranged in a row, so that no dead man shall be able to grumble or to complain that he has been forgotten before the letters of his name have

had time to wear themselves out. Nay, so great has been this zeal to prolong the memory of the oldest inhabitant of the yard, that even the headstones where nothing at all, neither name nor date, can be any more made out, have also been preserved with the rest. But as for the exact spot where anyone lies buried, that is clean forgotten and can never more be learned. Two or three of the more magnificent tombs have been left *in situ*. The ground, which is in shape what Euclid calls a gnomon, is laid out in flower-beds and shrubberies: there are wooden benches for the convenience of those old people who come here when the sun shines, to repose and meditate: the children drive their hoops—in hoop time—which is late autumn—about the paths.

This afternoon many old people were on the seats: some of them in the tasty uniform of the Union: the garden was in its fairest summer beauty: the leaves showed still their first bright green: the flower-beds were gay with annuals: some of the shrubs were in flower.

'It looks a pretty garden now,' said Althea. 'But its beauty lasts a very little while. The leaves fall off in September, and are swept up and carried away. Just now it looks too bright and happy for the burial-place of the poor prisoners. But come here in November when the leaves are all gone, and you will see nothing but black earth, black boughs, black trunks, and headstones which can no longer be read; and then you will remember who lie buried here. The Dorrits had no flower garden to look into: only a crowded churchyard covered with neglected graves and—I always think so—broken bottles. At this spot, at my feet, was buried my grandfather, Sylvester Indagine. And over there, against the wall, is his headstone. I keep it clean and scrape the black moss out of the letters. I really do think that his is the only stone which is still cared for.'

Laurence stepped across and read, 'In Memory of Sylvester Indagine, who died April 5th, 1842, in the Queen's Bench Prison. May the next world be kinder to him than this!'

'My father comes here sometimes, but not often, because the sight of the stone recalls the old time and revives the old bitterness. You spoke the other day, Mr. Waller, of Mr. Norbery. Never mention that name to my father again. It was Mr. Norbery who caused the ruin of my grandfather. First, he made him sell his property to himself, just before the new railway increased its value enormously: then he robbed him, somehow, of the purchase money: then, because there was still some chance of getting more money out of him, this greedy money-grubber threw him into prison and kept him there—until he died. The prisoner died cursing the name of Norbery.

But he lived on and prospered for forty years and longer afterwards. If all the curses laid upon the head of Mr. Norbery had taken effect, I know not what would have happened to him. Now, Mr. Waller, I will show you no more to-day. You came from Australia to see London, did you not? Well—this is a piece of London which I think that Australians very seldom do see. Let us go home.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESULT OF AN EXPERIMENT.

By five o'clock in the afternoon most of the students in the Physical Laboratory had put away their work and gone home. One cannot, I believe, successfully conduct a Research for more than six hours a day. Two or three were left, standing each at his own table, his own jet of gas, his tubes, his blow-pipes, and his scales beside him. The Demonstrator, who had all day long been assisting and advising the others, now stood idle, his hands in his pockets, either tired or a-thinking. The place was quiet—a physical laboratory can never be noisy—although, outside, the city was still at high tide of work and activity. Gresham College, as everybody knows, is the old college recently converted to ways of modern usefulness: and the Demonstrator to the Professor of Physics was none other than Mr. Oliver Luttrel, B.A. London, Ph.D. Heidelberg, and F.R.S. Yes although he was as yet no more than six or seven and twenty, for original work that he had done, important papers that he had written, and wonderful discoveries that he had made, this fortunate young man had already been received into that Royal Fellowship and was entitled to use after his name those three letters—the possession of which is the ambition of every worker in the field of science who respects himself. In the language of the Craft, he had already 'done something'—strange that these words in other circles should bear a meaning so widely different! —and he was expected to do a great deal more. Now a young man who is already a Fellow of the Royal Society, and is Demonstrator to one of the first men of the day, and has his work in London, is supposed to have the ball at his feet, even though his salary be no more than 150*l.* a year. What matters the salary? He has enough to live upon: he has a splendid Laboratory in which to work, filled with all the newest machinery: he is always in the centre and heart of everything that goes on: he gets to know everybody: he hears of every-

thing: he is sure of getting a good post in time:—such a man among those who follow science is counted worthy of envy. Whether, as the Doctor of Bank Side prophesied, this young man will become President of the Royal Society is a point which may be left open for time to show. It was an old woman who first made the sagacious remark that Time would show—I believe that all the really valuable remarks on the Conduct of Life have been made by old women. The men receive them and appropriate them: work them up into proverbs: illustrate them by fables: spin them out into poems, plays, and novels: call them their own. But they really belong to old women. Think of the profound wisdom of that ancient lady who first calmed the passions, soothed the fears, curbed the impatience, and cheered the despair of her grandchildren with the startling discovery that Time would show.

The Demonstrator, after looking round mechanically as if to see that no one was in difficulties, walked slowly and thoughtfully down the students' room. It was a long room, narrow and lofty; provided with a great number of tables, each for one student to work at undisturbed. At the end of this room was the Lecture Hall, a large square room with a platform for the lecturer, a great electric Battery, a blackboard, and a vast table covered with bottles, cylinders, tubes, and all manner of machines. Two doors, one on either side, led to two rooms. One of them was the private room of the Professor; the other that of the Demonstrator. The latter room, into which Oliver turned, was provided with a table at the window covered with papers, proofs, and letters, and fitted with drawers. Another table stood in the middle of the room on which were instruments of all kinds—delicate scales under glass, thermometers in wooden tubes, discs of glass, blow-pipes, gas jets, retorts, and strange instruments, the uses and names of which are unknown outside the trade.

The Demonstrator took a chair at the former table and sat down. But he did not immediately snatch a pen and begin to work. His papers were ready for him on the blotting-pad, but he regarded them not. His thoughts were outside his laboratory and beyond the world of science. In his hand he held two notes which he kept on reading over and over again, but mechanically and without paying any heed, for his thoughts were not with the letters nor with the writers of them. Yet he continued to read them—everybody knows how a simple mechanical trick, such as this, may sometimes assist the mind in a time of doubt or difficulty.

The first note was very short. It was written in a sprawling, half-taught hand, and the spelling was lamentable. Let us not expose the weaknesses of a lady.

'Dear Oliver,—Come to supper this evening after the Theatre. Harry will be here, and there will be nobody else except the old lady. Your affectionate sister, JULIA.'

The second, over which he had perhaps shed tears till there were none left—for he shed none now—was longer and pitiful.

'Dear Oliver,—Oh! how can you ever be anything but dear to me after all that has passed? You did love me six months ago. I could not be mistaken—and oh! how happy it made me only to see the love in your eyes and to feel the touch of your hand! You love me no longer: you have forgotten the words you said and swore. You have told me that it is all over: and you ask for your letters back again. I will never give you your letters back. As for the ring you gave me, it hangs about my neck, and it shall hang there all my life. It is harder for a girl to forget than for a man. You taught me to love you. Oh, you made me love you! I did not ask for your love. You gave it to me. For six months I have thought of you all day and all night. I cannot tear you out of my heart—and I will not. You shall live there always, whatever happens, and whatever you do. No one knows, and no one suspects, and I shall tell no one—not even Althea. So you can come and go as if nothing had happened. CASSIE.'

He read the letters one after the other. Then he put them down. Then he took them up and read them again. But as for his thoughts—it is impossible to translate into words the thoughts of a man, even the most stupid of men. They are lit up by so many side lights, flashes, and breadths of sunshine: they are so varied with shadow and with colour: they flow like a stream with so many twists, turns, waterfalls, rapids, backwaters, lashers, and broads, that it is impossible to do more than to indicate their tenor. Somewhat after this manner, however, the young man was thinking:—

'On his first stay—the first morning—he goes to Joe Mayes and tries to find out about old Norbery. Pretends not to know that he was dead. Asks after a will. Says there was a will. Who is he? How should he know out in Australia?—who told him? Was there really a will? He doesn't look like a lawyer's clerk. On his first visit at home he asks Uncle Clement what he knows about old Norbery. Who is he then? Althea says he has come all the way to gaze upon the heavenly poet. Ho! Very likely, indeed! To gaze upon the Bard. Mayes says he remembers signing a will—but he does not know its contents or what became of it, and he has forgotten how long ago it was. How should anyone in Australia know of that will? The other witness was Backler's chief clerk—who is dead. And Backler is

dead. If no one here except Mayes—who says he never spoke about it—knew that there was such a will, how should it be known in Australia? Why does he go and take lodgings at the Cottles'? Who is he? Who is he?'

He unlocked a drawer and drew out certain papers covered with notes, one of which he sat considering. 'Why not?' he said. 'Althea ought to have it all. Even if her father will not claim his rights. It should be hers—and mine.'

The sound of a manly footstep outside disturbed him. He pushed the paper back into the drawer, with the two letters, and rose from his chair to greet his visitor, who was none other than the Australian of whom he had been thinking.

'Glad to welcome you in my den,' he said, with a hand-shake and a smile of the friendliest. 'I thought you would like perhaps to see our newest Physical Laboratory—I believe we are very complete.'

'There,' he said presently, 'I think I have nothing more to show you. Perhaps you have a place in Sydney as well appointed as this. All the great cities of the world are becoming alike, just as all European hotels are alike. But you have not got our Professor,' he added with loyalty.

'I don't know much about Laboratories,' said Laurence. 'But in Sydney we like to think that we have the best of everything. Perhaps we deceive ourselves.'

They had come back to the Demonstrator's private room by this time. Oliver offered his visitor a cigarette-case and took a cigarette himself. Then he leaned back in his chair, tilting it up, and watching the wreaths of smoke.

'How do you like Bank Side?' he asked carelessly.

'Very much. I am greatly interested in Bank Side.'

'You will go down to posterity, my uncle Clement thinks, as the pilgrim who came all the way from Australia to gaze upon him.'

Laurence laughed. 'That is not a strictly correct way of putting it. I did, however, ask for an introduction to the poet. Remember that in Australia we do not often get the chance of meeting a poet.'

'Come now,' said Oliver sharply. 'Frankly, have you read a line of his poetry? Do you know anybody who has? Did you ever hear of his poetry before you came here?'

'Frankly, no. I have never seen or heard of his verses. But if he thinks I have, why disturb that belief? I did not deceive him, and I shall not undeceive him.'

'Humph! But you had heard of him before in reference to other matters?'

'Certainly, I had heard of him before, and of other people on

Bank Side. That is why I am here. Come, Luttrel, I have seen the question in your eyes a dozen times. They look at me and they say "Who the devil are you?"'

'Is it not natural? I find you installed at my father's house —*ami de famille*.'

'Perfectly natural. I am the son of Sir David Waller, K.C.M.G., Premier, unless he has been kicked out since I left, of the Government of New South Wales. I am over here on a holiday for myself and on certain private business for my father. And I have been asked to ascertain, while I am here, the present circumstances of certain people, including Mr. Clement Indagine.'

'I see. You will pardon the offensive curiosity of one not wholly uninterested in those people, I am sure. My father and my uncle are a pair of hermits. Althea is a hermit. They have never once, until your arrival, had a stranger within their gates. As for society at Bank Side, there is none. There is a clergyman or two—and there are, I suppose, a few doctors—sixpenny doctors. Well: they have taken a great liking to you—because you listen to their talk.'

'As for the talk, I assure you that I find it delightful.'

'Very good of you to say so. Perhaps it may be interesting at first to a stranger. As for myself I find it dull. It is the talk of thirty years ago. I would as soon read the Quarterly Reviews of the same date. Do you know what is the most deadly reading in the world? It is the day before yesterday's leading article. Very well—the talk at Bank Side is the talk of the last generation—which corresponds. Good Heavens! There is not a single point on which in thirty years we have not completely changed—and those two still love the old worn-out shibboleths and believe in the old worn-out doctrines. Yet, to you, no doubt it is interesting—at first.'

'Very interesting indeed.'

'My father, you see, held these old-fashioned notions and thought he could do nothing better with himself than buy a practice—such as it is—among the poor, and live for them. Well: he has lived for them: they send for him at all hours of the day and night, they never leave him for a couple of hours to himself. He is over sixty years of age: the poor have had the whole of his life: whether they are any the better for it I don't know: but they have had it, and so far as he himself is concerned, he has given himself away.'

Laurence at this point was by some unseen force violently snatched away. He was on Bank Side in the evening, and he was walking with the Doctor, who was speaking with enthusiasm.

'I left my son, Sir,' he was saying, 'to work out for himself his own creed, his theories, and his convictions. He has been brought up without dogma, without illusions, but without con-

tempt for those who hold this or that opinion. I have watched his mind expanding and feeding on the facts and laws of Nature. He has now reached the point when he has begun to understand the true Brotherhood of mankind, and the dependence of man upon man. Then he will proceed to the next grand lesson of life, that he who would save it must throw it away. He only truly lives who lives for others. Thus he will climb to the highest level of all—and understand the Christ. To learn step by step for himself is better than all the dogmas of the Sorbonne.'

Laurence in imagination heard these words a second time with a kind of pity. How would the Doctor be undeceived! Then his mind came back to the Laboratory. Oliver was talking—what had he said? But Laurence was only away in spirit for a brief moment.

'They still talk that kind of thing, I believe,' he was saying, 'but it has lost power except over a few enthusiasts. Formerly, the world was inclined to believe it. We are all Socialists now, of different kinds, and we go for first principles and laws of nature. For instance, most of us recognise the broad bottom fact that every man lives for himself. Some of the Socialists go on to demand an equal share of everything—most illogically. We want, on the other hand, a clear field for the fight, and for every man to get what he can.'

'Oh!' This was indeed to be at the point of recognising the beauty of sacrifice.

'They used,' continued the Philosopher, 'to believe in a Gospel of Supply and Demand, which was a very fine religion for capitalists, and made them grow rich with easy consciences. We are substituting the law by which the spoils go to the strong.'

'And is there to be no living for other people at all?'

'My dear Sir,' Oliver said with amiable pity, 'let us not talk vague sentiment. Come back to the hard facts—to the Laws of Nature. We cannot possibly get outside them, try as much as we please. Very well. Nature speaks to the Individual, not to the Community. She says, "Thou shalt eat." She doesn't say, "Thou shalt eat for thy neighbour." Not at all. Every man has got to eat for himself. Eating is a perfectly individual duty—for purely selfish purposes. That simple law is the foundation of private property, individualism, and everything.'

'According to that, the more we civilise the world, the more we develope the individual.'

'Quite so. To civilise a man is to create more wants: that is, to increase his appetite and his ravening. The more he desires to get things, the fiercer, the more resolute, the more unscrupulous he will be to get them. Humanity, as it gets more civilised, will become more and more a battle-ground for the strong, and a Hell for the weak. Don't you like the prospect?

If you are strong it will be a very pleasant life indeed, especially after you have fought your way up.'

The Philosopher took up a skull which stood on the table and turned it over in his hands. On the forehead someone had written in pencil—'Sicut Deus eritis.'

'Here is your man,' he said. 'This is his brain-pot. Whatever you do to this creature, he remains Man. He is Man who wants: Man who takes: Man who fights. Civilise him. Then, I say, he will want more, and he will fight the harder. What? Would you not fight to the death rather than go to live in an Irish cabin in rags and filth, on potatoes and bad whisky? You think you would rather die. But then you would not die if by killing your neighbour you could get what you want.' His eyes flashed for a moment. 'No—not if that alone would give it to you. Man must always trample on Man. That is the Law of Nature.'

'It seems a poor show for the future.'

'Not quite what we expected—eh? Not what we have been taught to expect, is it? Well: the good old bourgeois teaching is pretty well played out, I think. We are marching rapidly to the stage where there will be left no illusions. People will no longer, for instance, be persuaded that the wrongs of this world are going to be righted in the next: they will therefore want them righted now. As for the modern illusions about man's rights and man's equality—they will be given up, too. There is no equality, and nobody has got any rights. We shall openly educate the boys for the battle where the spoils go to the strongest. I like the contemplation of that time, for my own part. No privilege of rank—no inheritance: no rights for anybody. A free and fair fight and no favour. It will be a splendid time for the strong man.'

'Is there any place for pity for the weak?'

'In the long run—none. The last illusions to be thrown away will be the illusions of pity and of love. The highest development of civilisation will be a supreme individualism: it will be a return to savage times, with the addition of all the modern wants and the modern science.'

'And what will happen then?'

'I do not know'—Oliver laughed a low, musical laugh—'I do not know. It will be a very fine world, that is certain. Only the strongest allowed to live, unless—which may come—we breed a race of slaves intellectually and physically inferior. An interesting world! A really interesting world! Full of curious things!'

'No honour, no religion, no morality, no pity, no love?'

'My friend, no illusions. That sums up the situation. This seems to me the tendency of modern things.'

'I came to see a Laboratory,' said Laurence, laughing, 'and I learn a lesson on the New Political Economy.'

'Not a published Economy. Pray understand me: I see, or think I see, the current beginning to flow in a certain direction. It is interesting to consider what may happen. That is all. As for me, I am a man of science, and I have no interest in any Political Economy.'

It was as if he felt that he had said too much.

'Well,' said Laurence, 'I am interested in both your Laboratory and your lecture. Thanks for both. We shall meet at Bank Side—perhaps to-night? No! I don't intend to believe, you know,' he said laughing, 'that any of the old illusions are going to be given up.'

'Not given up. They are slowly vanishing, like the mists at sunrise. We shall stand in the clear light and see ourselves, as we are.' He laid his hand, perhaps by accident, on the skull again. '*Au revoir*. At Bank Side, or elsewhere for choice.'

'He knows something that he won't tell,' Oliver murmured as his visitor closed the door. 'Does he know what I only found out a week ago?'

He took an envelope out of his pocket-book. It was old and stained. 'I found it,' he said, 'in an old desk. I wonder I never found it before.' He opened the letter in it and read:—

'Dear Bob,—I have got here safe. I don't know, yet, what I shall do or where I shall go. They tell me that the best thing I can do is to make for the West where new towns are springing up and there's a chance for a fellow. I've got enough money to last for two or three months. Out in a Western town, I may be editor, lawyer, land surveyor, doctor—anything I please. If my uncle Sam Norbery makes a certain discovery and carries on about it, please tell Clem that I couldn't go away without doing something to make him in a rage. After all, it is nothing that can do anybody any harm. Keep Clem out of my uncle's clutches. Ugh! what claws he has! I wonder if he would have been so hard upon us if my mother had lived. The memory of his sister was of no avail, so perhaps her living presence would have done nothing. Write to me.

'Yours ever,
'ÆNEAS INDAGINE.'

'His nephew! Clement is old Sam Norbery's nephew. And no will! And he knows by this time that the old man is dead, and yet he makes no sign. He is capable of anything—the two together are even capable of leaving all that money unclaimed. And all—all—would go to Althea. I wonder what this fellow Waller knows and what is his business! Well, let us think: let us think. A world without illusions: every man for himself: for

the man of resource a most interesting world, full of strange projects and crafty enterprises. A very interesting world indeed.' His eye fell on Cassie's note. 'No illusions, my poor Cassie: not even the illusion of love! Recent discoveries have destroyed that illusion.'

Laurence walked slowly away. Outside, in the street, he looked about him. The City was the battle-field: the men who hurried along the streets were the combatants. There was nothing, then, after all, but the fight for food first and for luxuries afterwards. There would never be anything else. All the rest was illusion.—He shuddered.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THE THEATRE.

THE curtain at the Alhambra fell at eleven o'clock, or thereabouts, upon the final scene of the most gorgeous ballet ever put upon that stage. The central figure of the group was, of course, the lovely and accomplished Giulia Coroni, the most popular favourite that had ever appeared even upon those boards. She stood in the midst, surrounded by her attendant nymphs—I believe she was Diana, but perhaps she was Venus—all with gleaming arms and sparkling eyes and set smiles and tow wigs, and all bathed in the radiance of I know not how many coloured lamps. When, in obedience to the applause of the House, the curtain rose again for a minute, the *danseuse* stepped forward and bowed and smiled collectively and individually upon all her admirers. That is to say, she was a woman with black eyes so bright and so quick that every one of her thousand lovers caught a glance from her which he took as intended solely for himself. Youth is foolish: youth is credulous: youth knows not the word impossible: youth went home from the Alhambra with beating heart and cheeks aglow, thinking of those flashing eyes and that glance. This, though youth was penniless: this, though youth brandished the yard measure in Regent Street: this, though he guided the swift pen in the City: this, though by Granta's silver stream he meditated the Mathematic Muse for scholastic purposes: this, though the white collar and the flopping felt were already made for his reverend brows. Youth, when he got home, sat down to write a love letter before he could go to bed. He offered his valuable hand and his valuable heart and promised to lay at the feet of the Goddess the whole of his future—the present—owing to ancestral prodigality—not being worth offering. This was the reason, and no other, why two postmen, instead of one, had to

do the first morning round in Victoria Street. They were wanted to carry the love letters addressed to the Signora Giulia Coroni. She opened them all: if one contained, as sometimes happened, a ring or a bracelet, she smiled and kept it. The rest she threw into the fire. But she answered none of them.

Half an hour after the curtain fell she appeared at the stage door, where was formed, as usual, a lane of those young men who still openly worship Venus and come nightly to gaze upon the Goddesses in mufti whom they have just adored in their celestial dress. The glamour of the stage remains in the eyes of those worshippers for half an hour at least; wherefore, for the moment, the ladies who come forth from the stage door are as beautiful under the gaslight in their stuff frocks and shabby hats—or in their silks and sealskins—as when the electric light was turned upon them in their flaxen wigs and the sparkling bravery of their stage attire.

At the aspect of the illustrious Giulia, wrapped from head to foot in a soft grey mantle, the lane with one consent murmured aloud, as if the sight of so much loveliness, with the memory of that last group upon the stage, simply compelled the voice of admiration. Thus Beauty, like Dentistry, or the worship of Baal, may cause man, natural man, to cry aloud. She walked with her shapely head thrown back, as if to let them see her face the better: the gaslight fell full upon her dark cheeks and jet-black hair and flashed in her black eyes. In that brief moment of transit she swept the crowd with her swift glance: she laughed in their faces, as if she rejoiced to think of the young men yearning for the impossible. So Circe laughed aloud at sight of her pigs. Yet each of these Transformations swinishly interpreted her contempt into selection and preference. Thus every one of these young men received the dancer's laughter as a gracious mark of favour meant for himself alone. When she got into her brougham, one young man stepped forward and, raising his hat, dropped into her lap a bouquet as beautiful and as large as, in the month of July, they are made. She laughed and nodded her head to him: the carriage drove away: and the fortunate donor of the bouquet, thus honoured by special recognition—he would have been torn to pieces by jealous rivals had he remained—vanished into the darkness. Let us be charitable to this lane of amorous youth. The worship of the actress is only the worship of Beauty in the abstract. All the virtues, all the graces, all the loveliness, all the charms of womanhood are concentrated in a creature inconceivably beautiful, dancing, smiling, posturing, acting, singing upon the stage. Let them worship their ideal. When, like Giulia Coroni, the Goddess is unapproachable, and always drives home alone in her brougham, no harm is done to anybody; and since in this case the object of their worship really

was a most beautiful woman, a truly lofty ideal of beauty and grace was nourished in the hearts of her adorers.

The Signora lived in a flat, one of those in Royalty Mansions, Victoria Street. She was the tenant of the first floor. The ground floor was occupied by an Irish Peer, who in these hard times cultivated the profession of Director and was doing tolerably well. On the second floor was an advertising stockbroker—one of those benevolent magicians who, for the paltry consideration of a 'cover' of ten pounds, will make you the owner of a goodly, if not a princely, fortune, and then again—presto!—with a twirl of his wand will cause this beautiful pile to vanish away—'cover' and all. He and his friends always walked up and down the stairs as slowly as ever they possibly could in order to meet—if kind fortune should give them that chance—the divine Giulia. This event came off about once in four months, but when it happened it caused their hearts to glow with rapture ineffable. Sometimes, too, they met his Lordship. These gentlemen belonged to that class of City young men—I am told that it is now singularly small and daily diminishing—who love above all things the sight of an actress or a singer or a dancer off the stage: next to this, they love the sight of a Lord. The advertising broker, as is often the case with men who make an early success, had a large following of friends: they were bitterly jealous and envious of his good fortune, and behind his back remembered his pre-successful times, the obscurity of his father, the lowly condition of his cousins, the meagreness of his first beginning, and the time when he would have been thankful to possess a spare half-sovereign. These reminiscences, which are the chief solace of the unsuccessful, did not in the least prevent them from drinking as much champagne, eating as many dinners and suppers, and having as gaudy a time at the expense of this Fortune's darling as he would stand. The money flowed in, and the money flowed out. Who would not be an advertising stockbroker to take their money from greedy gamblers and give it to his friends and to deserving tradesmen and virtuous showmen? As for the top of the house, it was inhabited by a journalist who never came home until the stockbroker's friends had gone, and never got up until the middle of the day when they were all in the City.

When the Signora arrived home, supper was already served and her supper party were waiting for her. The party consisted of two men only: one of them our friend Oliver Luttrel, and the other a tall and swarthy man, handsome, in his way, which was something in the light cavalry trooper style, or the circus rider style—he would have looked well in the costume of an Afghan warrior, or in the full dress of an Indian Rajah. He would also have made a good model for Jugurtha, or indeed Belteshazzar, or perhaps General Hamilcar. But in evening dress he was in-

complete. Apart from his face and head, which were remarkable, there was nothing to distinguish him from his kind, or fellow-professors, who are always seen in evening dress when the shades of night prevail. It is now a part of the profession to put on evening dress—they may be seen every night in the lobbies and lounges of certain theatres. The evening dress which they wear is of the most pronounced kind possible within the very limited range allowed. One would think that they wished to call attention to their aristocratic appearance and manners—beneath that costume what but the most unblemished honour could survive? The flower in the button-hole is as large and splendid as can be procured: the chains, rings, studs, and wrist-links are big and beautiful: the linen is snow-white and ample: the overcoat and hat are absolutely correct. They know a good many men who frequent the same haunts, just as their predecessors used certain taverns: they are sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by young gentlemen from the country or from the colonies, to whom they communicate information of the most useful kind. Of course they are sometimes seen in morning dress, and then it is on racecourses. And I am told that there are now certain clubs whose members enjoy not only smoking concerts, dances, dramatic recitals, and the handling of the gloves, but a little nap, baccarat, or piquet, in quiet card rooms. Formerly, the word Pigeon would have occurred to the mind at the sight of this gentleman, and one would have looked around or waited to hear the cooing of the dove. Formerly, too, the name of this gentleman was Hawk, and the hawk belongs to a good and ancient family of fighting habits. Now—such is the degeneracy of modern manners—the pigeon, who came of a good and honourable, if simple, stock, exists no longer. In his place is the Juggins, who is stupid but not credulous: who would be crafty if he could: who is only a lamb when he thinks he is a wolf: and would himself, if he could, become the modern successor to the ancient Hawk. Whatever you call that successor, apply the title, dignity, and description to Mr. Harry Stanley, the one of the Signora's guests who was in evening dress. He was smoking a cigarette at the open window, and he was conversing in a low voice with Oliver Luttrel, who was sitting at the same window. Their conversation, if we may judge by the scowl on the latter's face, was not pleasant.

Although the season was early in July and the evening was warm, a fire was burning in the grate. On the hearthrug in front of the fire lay a figure wrapped from head to foot in a great crimson cloak, the head propped on pillows. It was so motionless and still that you might have taken it for a bundle of clothes or a lay figure; neither of the two men regarded it in the least.

shrunken, toothless, her face lined with a thousand curves, bent with rheumatic pains, and shaking her head with palsy—mumbling and grumbling—a very terrible old woman to look at. The girl twisted her wig straight—it had wriggled round so as to cover one eye—pulled her things right, and led or carried her to an armchair at the table, where she sat blinking her eyes and bobbing her head. She was dressed, however, in black silk and had a gold chain round her neck, and looked wealthy if not venerable.

Julia poured out a tumblerful of champagne and gave it to her. The effect on the old lady was wonderful. She ceased to shake her head and sat up, and her eyes became steady: she was no longer contemptible or pitiable.

Then she looked about the table and saw the two men.

'Pharaoh!' she murmured affectionately. 'What a man he is! It does an old woman good only to look at such a man. Ah, once they used to look at me. Give him all he wants, Sal, all he wants. Brothers such as him are scarce. Give him all you've got so that he may go about with the swells. Is that Sam—little Sam? Oh! I knew him again when first he came back to us, three weeks ago. He ain't growed much. But he was always a little shrimp. An ugly little devil he was, too.'

'Very well, Granny. Now we will sit down and have supper, and let us talk.'

They waited on themselves. After all, that was but a return to old customs, and was no hardship but a relief. In their waiting the plates mostly went into the corner where the cloak lay, because a lady does not change her personal habits with her clothes, and the divine Julia, not to speak of the gallant Harry, remembered many of the habits peculiar to the tent and the road, and practised them when no one was looking. As for the dear old lady, she sucked the bones and scraped her plate, and used the knife instead of the fork, quite after the old fashion, without shame or knowledge that there should be any shame. And all of them attacked the supper, which consisted of many excellent dishes, including cold salmon, mayonnaise, aspic of plovers' eggs, other crafty compounds of jelly and toothsome things, and tarts and cakes, with a vigour and heartiness perhaps hereditary. In the old days their ancestors, when they did get a feast, which was not often, made the most of it.

As for the old lady, the champagne had so set her up that she took as much supper as her granddaughter, speaking not one word until she had quite finished. Then she held out her glass and drank off another tumbler of champagne. This despatched, she fell back in her chair and began to murmur, sometimes under her breath and sometimes aloud.

'She's been at the cards again,' said Julia. 'She was sitting

over them all the afternoon. She's full of our fortunes. Never mind, Granny—we don't want to know what's going to happen.'

'The Jack of Spades—that's Sam,' said the old lady. 'The Jack of Clubs is Pharaoh. I read Sam's fortune for him to-day, I did. Ho! ho! if Sam only knew what was coming!'

'He don't want, Granny,' Julia interposed. 'Oliver, it seemed a grand thing for you, that day when the swell took you away in a growler and I climbed up behind to see where you were going. Sal, I was then—now I'm Julia—things have altered a bit, haven't they? Look at me now. Look at the fine times I'm having. Come and see me at the Theatre, with all the House clapping and stamping the moment I appear: look at me—able to live like this—to drink champagne every day—to put on as much silk and velvet as I can—what do you call that?'

'It means success,' said Oliver, whose face, thanks to the champagne, had lost its scowl. 'It means, I suppose, that you've gone to the front, Julia.'

'Very well, then, look at Harry—Pharaoh that was. Look at him, there isn't a swell to come near him for looks and manners. And as for money, sometimes it runs like water.'

'When things come off,' her brother corrected her, with becoming modesty.

'Well—they mostly do—whereas you, why, you poor little chap—you've got to work. Something in the chemist shop line, I understand, among the bottles and the scales. You're the first man in the family that ever did work. With all your work, you've got no money: you never will have any. No money! Then you can't stand suppers to the girls after the theatre—and you can't give them dinners of a Sunday: you can't take stalls, nor buy bouquets: you can't wear swell clothes: you can't show rings and things: and as for races and betting—how can you go to any meetings or learn what goes on when you're always in the shop? So, you see, we did better to stick in the dossing ken, though Granny did do her best to sell us.'

'A fair man and a little woman and a stranger from across the seas are on their way to do harm to Sammy. Let him take care of a fair man and a little woman and a stranger from across the seas. A young man and a young woman and a man from across the seas—two men from across the seas. Let him take care. They will do him a mischief—let him take care.'

'All right, Granny,' said Julia. 'If every young man took care of every young woman, there wouldn't be any mischief at all, and there would be no fun. That is quite certain. Well, Oliver, what was I saying? Oh! Yes—you've got no money. Now if you'd stayed with us you'd have learnt something useful. I began to dance at the races when I was only eight, and Harry

he began to sing character songs and to practise with the cards wellnigh as soon as he could walk. You'd have been a tight-rope dancer, or a rider, or a clown, or something that rakes in the money.'

'He's got to find some way of raking in the money,' said Harry. 'That's what I've been telling him.'

'How much is it, Harry? What has he lost?'

'Well, it don't matter much what he owes me. If I'd lost, I should have had to pay, I suppose. But he lost a matter of twenty pound last Sunday, and I must pay if he can't.'

'Well, I'll give him the twenty pound. As for you, Oliver, if you don't know how to play, what a fool you are to try! What can you expect? Why, I suppose you can't even cut the King. How *can* a man be such a fool as to play when he don't know how? Teach him to play, can't you, Harry?'

The easy morality of his newly recovered relations—it was only three weeks or so since Mr. Harry Stanley walked into the Laboratory and revealed himself as a long-lost brother—was no longer astonishing. Oliver knew very well the circumstances of his origin: that is to say, he remembered the squalid surroundings from which he had been taken: that a brother of his should have risen to any level in which evening dress is worn, was a surprise, which, until he learnt more, was pleasing. That his sister was a favourite *danseuse* was another surprise, by no means unpleasant at first. By this time he had learned more about his brother: there were things to be deplored, that was now certain: there were things to be hidden. The discovery of this fact at first amused him: nobody knew that this man was his brother: nobody suspected that his sister was the celebrated Giulia Coroni. It was a new world to which he was introduced: he listened to their talk and watched their habits. Nothing at all resembling these people had he seen in Heidelberg. He was very much amused: he was so much amused when his brother took him to his club that he was induced to play a little game of cards—and lost.

'Well,' repeated his sister, 'I'll pay for him, and do you look after him better, Harry. Open another bottle and let me give Oliver some more. He's had nothing.' She meant nothing but pure hospitality. Her younger brother had really taken as much champagne as is wholesome to an unaccustomed head. But he suffered his sister to fill him another of those great glasses with which the restaurants and people who seem to take their manners from restaurants do now delude the unwary. He drank it. And presently there fell upon his spirit a new sense of *camaraderie* and fraternity. He remembered that he belonged to these people: he was really and truly of their blood: he seemed to remember—but this was impossible—the tents and the road.

Like them, he did not belong to the world: he was outside it: he was one of the nation which has always lived by the exercise of its wits. His brother, for instance, was a betting man, an adventurer, a card-sharper: one who looked about for gulls and plundered them. Why not? Why not?

This was a singular view to take, but he fell into it quite naturally. Honour has nothing to do with the wandering race of Egypt.

They began to talk about himself and to ask him questions. By this time he had taken another and yet another bumper.

. . . . . .

When he awoke in the morning it was with a strange sense of having lost something. He got up, and dressed, troubled with this thought—what had he lost?

Suddenly he remembered he had given away a secret: a thing which he had discovered: and that he had communicated, in the rough, a half-formed idea. It was an idea so certain to commend itself to his brother that he had communicated it with boastfulness. The idea had, in fact, met with his brother's full approbation. He had even added suggestions of his own which almost transformed the idea into a plan.

'Oliver,' he said, laying his hand upon his shoulder, 'I never expected to find you so wide awake. My dear boy,' he added, with feeling, 'the utmost I dreamed of was that you might get something—some day—when we are all hard up—off the old man. I will see you through this job, sonny.'

Oliver had been left, as we know, to find out for himself the true theory of the Conduct of Life and of the relations of man to man. But he had been among fellow-students of a German University, and he had been among English boys at school. He had therefore acquired, not by the process of reasoning, but by imitation and daily association, certain notions of honour. And when he remembered this talk with his brother, and the thing which he was going to be 'seen through,' he turned pale and his knees trembled. The reign of the Individual may have begun, but the power of old illusions is not yet trampled out: they are sturdy rebels, and the safety of the Individual's Crown sometimes seems by no means assured.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTERRUPTED RAMBLE.

THE exploration of Poet and Player Land was followed by other rambles, Althea always being guide. In this way the young man whom she conducted—never had colonial visitor so splendid a chance!—learned to surround all kinds of mean and squalid places with the halo of history and romance. They remain, it is true, mean and squalid still; but just as Bank Side itself was made glorious by the setting sun and by the goddess who came down the river in the golden mist, so the narrow lanes in which they wandered are clothed, in his mind, with the memories of the past. Nay, when he still thinks of them, he sees again the graceful figure of the girl, again he watches her earnest face, he feels again the look of her steadfast eyes, he hears her voice sweet and low. Where the crowded streets now cover what was once the splendid Abbey of Bermondsey: where Lambeth Palace stands beside the river: where were once Cupid's Gardens: where the ships stick their bowsprits across the streets of Rotherhithe: beside the pretty lake of Southwark Park: yea, and across the river in the heart of London City, the girl walked beside him, rapt and serious, recalling things that have been. It is a time which he will not readily forget. How should he forget the happiest time in his life—those days when, for the first time in his life, he began to feel that henceforth life would be impossible without one girl? A man may suffer from such an attack and recover from it; and again he may suffer and again recover—nay, there are men who have it like a quartan fever; but the first experience is the most severe and the most delightful. Such worship can a young man bring to one woman only, in all his life. Of which more anon.

These rambles must remain unchronicled. Can we not make them out for ourselves from the London books?

But one day, a fortnight or so after their first walk, they proposed to travel, all through one afternoon, from west to east, from Puddle Dock to Tower Hill, from one end to the other of Thames Street. It was an ambitious programme, because the history of London might almost be written in Thames Street alone. Yet they attempted it, and, but for an unexpected interruption, they would have carried it through.

It was again, as on their first walk, a Saturday afternoon. On other afternoons the street is filled with noise: its cranes in the upper stories are always labouring, creaking, and groaning

as they lift or lower the bales: the sky is darkened with these big bales as they swing and threaten over the heads of the passengers: there is a bawling from Billingsgate which can be heard afar off: waggons lumber along and block the road: clerks hasten up and down: porters lean against posts and converse loudly, not without frequent use of the decorative word which always brightens workaday English. But on Saturday there is a holy calm. If it is a bright afternoon the sunshine on the tall warehouses makes them look like mediæval fortresses or Italian Palazzi.

One would rather walk down Thames Street than the High of Oxford, or the Cannebière of Marseilles, or the Rue St. Honoré. The modern warehouses are not in the least picturesque, yet the names which remain carry the memory back; the succession of churches, though broken here and there by the havoc of modern barbarians, marks the piety of London merchants; the narrow courts still lead to the old stairs, and the two ancient ports of Queenhithe and Billingsgate can still be seen.

The sunshine fell upon the street this afternoon as they stood at the West end of it in Printing House Square.

'You are going to teach me more history,' said Laurence. 'Shall we become ghosts once more?'

'If you like,' she replied. 'But there is a great deal more history here than I can teach you in a single afternoon. Come.'

Then she began to talk. London began in Thames Street, where two little hillocks, with a brook between, rose above the river, on either side a swamp. When the hillocks were quite built upon and still there was not room enough for the trade which continued to grow, they built a river wall and more houses behind it; and then they constructed their two ports, and as they grew richer they began to build stately houses upon the river wall: at one end Baynard's Castle and at the other the Tower: in the midst Cold Harbour and the King's Steelyard. Here lived the Hanse merchants: here were the Halls of City Companies: in the streets leading up the hill at the back stood many a noble mansion in its courtyard, full of precious carvings, rich tapestry and caskets from foreign parts: along the street was a succession of noble churches, each with its monuments and tombs, its vaults and its churchyard filled with the bones of dead citizens.

'Do you see the dead citizens walking in the streets?' asked Laurence.

'Sometimes,' she replied, with a little blush. 'On Sunday morning, when there has been no one in the street but myself, I have met Sir Richard Whittington, tall and thin, grey-bearded, with a chain of esses round his neck and a black

velvet coat over his silk doublet. He is a very stately figure: he carries himself with dignity, and in his face there is Authority.'

Then Althea led her scholar down the narrow courts to the river-side, and up the streets which lead to the higher part: she showed him the churches and the places where the churches had been: Whittington's College and the place where his bones are lying still: the Companies' Halls: the port of Queenhithe, which still preserves its ancient form though the buildings round it are modern: the great houses still standing, and the ancient stairs and wharves—she was filled to overflowing with the history of the whole.

When they were as yet no more than halfway down the street occurred the interruption which has been already mentioned. Althea stopped at the corner of a street leading north. A little way up the street there was a church Tower set a little back, and, projecting from its face, a great clock reaching halfway across the street, with a curious little figure upon it. This church led to the Unexpected Event which changed the aspect and the memory of that walk.

'It is the church of St. Leonard le Size,' she said. 'I wonder if you would like to see it. There is not a great deal to see, but the wood carvings are fine, and it is Aunt Cornelia's Church. She is always there.'

'Aunt Cornelia's church! My brain reels. Is she the Rector, or the Vicar, or perhaps the Curate only?'

Althea laughed.

'Why,' she said, 'Aunt Cornelia is the pew-opener and caretaker.'

'Oh!' His face fell. The drop from Rector or Vicar—at one time he had even thought of Bishop or Archdeacon—to Caretaker and Pew-opener was sudden and overwhelming. His cousin too! He would have greatly preferred hearing that she was the Incumbent of the Living.

'Her husband was Sexton of the church, and so she got the place. Mr. Waller, I thought you knew that at Bank Side we are all humble people. What else could you expect?'

'I have found, Miss Indagine, what no one would have expected.'

'You mean that you have found my father.' He did not exactly mean that, but the girl said it in the most perfect innocence and without any consciousness of what another girl would have seen at once. Therefore he accepted the interpretation with meekness.

'Why not a pew-opener?' he replied. 'Pews must be opened. It is a part of the Church Ritual. Where there are pews there must be pew-openers. In the early Church—but I forget the Greek for pew-opener——' Then a curious arithme-

tical problem arose in his brain and took the form of a sum in Rule of Three: 'If a Pew-opener be described as in the Church, what may be the limits of the Higher Branch?' But he reserved the solution of this problem for a fitting opportunity.

'Come and see the church,' said Althea, 'and Aunt Cornelia in it.'

'Why do you call her Aunt? You are no relation of the Cottles, are you?'

'No, indeed. But I have known Cassie and Flavia all my life, and so, you see, I have got into the way. Here is the porch.'

She would have led the way into the church, but stopped and drew back.

'Oh!' she murmured, with pity in her voice. 'Here is that poor creature again.'

From the church within there were heard voices: first, a hard measured voice, speaking with precision, and as the words were harsh, they seemed to fall like hammers. The other was a soft and gentle voice, replying humbly.

'You mean to stand there and tell me that you have dusted and swept the whole church—the whole church—in this short time?'

'Yes.'

'You've forgotten the organ.'

'I have not forgotten anything.'

'Then there was never any money so easily earned. I wonder you are not ashamed to take it. Here's your shilling. Take it and go. A shilling indeed! More than half of it is Charity. Don't let me see your face again till Saturday next. Well—why don't you go? What are you stopping for?'

'I owe for three weeks' rent—seven and sixpence. Where am I to find seven and sixpence? All this week I have only earned three and eightpence, counting this shilling. Three shillings and eightpence! Three and eightpence! Think of trying to live on three and eightpence for a whole week! When I've paid one week's rent, there is one and twopence left for food.'

'You have only got what you deserved to get. You have made your bed. Now lie upon it.'

'Oh! Cornelia, have you no pity?'

'You are a disgrace to the family. Pity? Don't I give you work and a shilling a week? Isn't that Christian Forgiveness?'

'Let me go and ask Claudia.'

'No. You shall not trouble Claudia. If you venture to trouble Claudia or Lucius it will be the worse for you. Get work. It is all you can do. Go away, I say, and look for work.'

The woman came out, walking slowly and with bent figure

She was no longer young, but her face was still sweet and must once have been beautiful. Now it was pinched with privation and heavy with trouble. She was very poorly dressed: in a black gown with some kind of jacket mournful in decay and a very battered bonnet. Althea ran to meet her, taking her by both hands, the tears in her eyes.

'Oh,' she said, 'I heard all. Why—why—did you not come to tell me? I might have done something.'

'She won't let me. I am never to go on the other side at all for fear I should meet Claudia and Lucius or be recognised by the children. Oh! as if my own sister would recognise me now—let alone the children, who have never seen me!'

'Then I will come to you since you must not come to me. I cannot pay your rent for you because I have no money at all—no—not a shilling in the world. But we can talk and perhaps we shall find out a way somehow. Good-bye. Go home straight. I will come to you presently.'

The poor woman walked slowly away. Laurence looked on wondering, not knowing what this might mean. Then Althea joined him again with the manner of one who wished the late incident to be regarded as closed.

'Come,' she said. 'Let us go into the church.'

They found Aunt Cornelia sitting in a hard, straight-backed chair without arms, a chair of Penance, in the antechamber, Galilee or Pronaos—a large and comfortable room beautifully wainscoted with mahogany, now two hundred years old and more, and black, but lustrous. There was a religious obscurity in the place. The Pew-opener's chair was outside the doors of the church, and if Aunt Cornelia had been forming part of a grand concerted piece with a thousand eyes upon her she could not have sat with greater solemnity. As for the admonition she had just bestowed upon her humble sister, that had left no ripple upon the serenity of her face. She sat with her hands in her lap, bolt upright, as one who knows her dignity. She was an officer of the church, which, with its pews, prayer-books, bibles, hassocks, curtains, cushions, beadle's mace, its tablets, its vestry, its cupboard with the Sacramental Plate, and its Registers, was all under her care. It has been observed concerning ladies of this profession, that whereas most women find repose impossible and must still be at work with needle or knitting, unless they are talking, reading, shopping, or at the Theatre, pew-openers are gifted with the power of sitting still without doing anything at all: and of sitting alone and in silence. They are, to be sure, generally old: they have, thanks to their office, no anxiety about the daily bread: their season of love and its alarms is over long ago: they are at rest: the calm of the church has entered into their souls: they desire no physical

activity. Sailors of the old school, accustomed to long spells of calm and to long hours of idle watch with the trade wind blowing steady and not a sail to change, used to arrive at a similar restfulness of soul.

Cornelia looked up as they entered from the Porch. She recognised them with a smile of welcome, or perhaps of pride. To be surprised by her lodger in the full discharge of her official duties was gratifying. Thus should every zealous servant be discovered!

'Aunt Cornelia,' said Althea, 'I have brought Mr. Waller to see the church.'

'I will show him the church,' she said rising. 'I dreamed last night that I was chopping wood. It is a sure sign of a stranger.'

She opened the door and led the way into the church within. The round-headed windows were filled with modern painted glass: there was a good deal of gilding about the East, over the altar hung a great painting: the pulpit and reading-desk, organ gallery, and wherever room could be found for it, were covered with wood carvings of fruit and flowers. On the walls, betweer the windows, hung tablets to the memory of dead parishioners It is a very ancient parish: thousands of good citizens lie buried in its vaults: but the Great Fire burned the ashes of all who were there when it flamed through the church and changed the stone carvings and the splendid tombs into lime and powder. Half a dozen Lord Mayors, at least, lie here; and Heaven only knows how many Aldermen, Common Councilmen, and Ancient Masters of the City Company which came here every year on its High Day.

Cornelia displayed the treasures of the church with the air—few pew-openers or vergers achieve it—of a lady showing her own picture gallery or library. She was at once modest and proud. Laurence followed her, admiring mechanically. Indeed, there are many Churches in London City more interesting than that of St. Leonard le Size, and it was not conceived in Wren's happiest mood. The young man was thinking of his cicerone. Cornelia was in the Church. Cannot a lady be in the Church except in this humble position? Shameful! And his mother—remembering this little prim figure with the big head and the smooth black hair plastered flat to the sides and brought up behind the ear—could still believe that her cousins represented the Higher School of Manners. His mother, the most gracious, the best mannered lady in the Colony! And who was the Disgrace to her Family?

Cornelia led them back into the Porch. Laurence thought that they had seen everything. But she took out a candlestick from some secret recess and lit the candle in it, saying, severely, 'You must see the Body before you go.'

The Body! Was there, then, going to be an Inquest? Perhaps: for at the appearance of the candlestick Althea fled.

Cornelia found a key upon her bunch and unlocked one of the mahogany panels which differed in no respect from the others, save that it had a keyhole, invisible, except by the light of a candle. When the panel was opened it disclosed, behind a sheet of glass six feet high, a dried-up body standing bolt upright, its head a little bent and its eyelids cast down, as if ashamed of being seen in such a withered, naked, helpless, imprisoned condition, its flesh long since shrivelled and dead, the skin clinging tight to the bones, its cheeks fallen in, its lips, thin and white, drawn tightly over the projecting teeth.

'Good Heavens!' cried Laurence. 'What are you going to do with a mummy?'

'He was found,' said Cornelia, changing the position of the candle so as to bring out the best points of the Body, 'in the vaults when they were examined before bricking them up for good. The other corpses were gone to bones and dust, but this one, you see, was somehow preserved. He dried up. Because it was such a curious thing they brought him up and made a cupboard for him behind the wainscoting. A beautiful Body he is, to be sure. Six feet high he must have been, with a very fine leg of his own, they tell me. And there's an arm for you!' The shrivelled limb with the skin tight to the bone hung at his side. 'There's a breadth of shoulder! I wonder sometimes who he was: not a common person to be buried in the vaults. Perhaps a Lord Mayor or the Master of a Company. He's worn a gold chain in his time and sat in a chair of office. Well,' she sighed, holding the candle before the bent head still covered with lank hair, 'I dare say his eyes were young once, like yours, young man.' Laurence shuddered. 'As he is now, so shalt thou be. Then go away and think of me. He is company for me while I am sitting alone here, especially in the dusk. I think there's two of us in the church to look after it—him and me. Many a time I light the candle and unlock the panel just to look at him and to give him a little light. Little do the people think when they come here of a Sunday—they do come—sometimes I've counted as many as thirteen at service, all at once—I say—little do they think what is behind the wainscot. Sometimes I long to open the door and show them what we've got here. You're a beauty, you are!' She bobbed the candle up and down so that the light produced the appearance of what we call play of feature—and it was very ghastly. 'As he is now, so shall they be. Then let them go away and think of—of he.' She stroked the glass with her hand and tenderly patted it as if she were patting the cheek of the Body in order to cheer and comfort him in his long imprisonment. Then she sighed regretfully, as one who laments

that friends must part, blew out the candle, and locked the panel.

There was nothing more to show. She had done her duty. She retired to her chair and resumed her seat, her lips pursed, her hands crossed in her lap, as if the interview were over and she must now be left to continue her silent watch over the empty church with her brother guardian the Body. Laurence left her sitting watchful and silent in this place of shadows. Without, he found Althea waiting for him, clothed with sunshine. Within, age, shadow, silence, and death presented in its most hideous form. Without, youth and light, sunshine and beauty.

'Do you know,' he asked, 'this dreadful thing that they have got there?'

'I saw it once,' she replied shuddering.

'And she sits there all day with that awful Body close beside her?'

'All day long and every day. The church is always open and no one ever goes into it. She is always alone. She likes the Body. Hush! Cassie once found her sitting in front of the open panel with two candles, and she was talking to the Body.'

'I should not be surprised to learn that on dark days the Body walked out of the cupboard and that they took a turn together in the vaults below. But that she should sit and talk to it—I wonder what the Body talks about. However, it fully accounts for Aunt Cornelia's pale face.'

'Shall we go on with Thames Street?'

'Shall we shut the book of history here? Aunt Cornelia has put me off the antiquities of Thames Street. Sometimes—don't you think so?—the Living are more interesting than the Dead. She sits in the dark empty church all day and she talks to a Body behind a glass. And she blows up the unfortunate Disgrace to the Family—the Family!' He remembered suddenly that it was his own. 'Who is she? Who is she? You know her. Who is the Disgrace, and what is her name?'

'I have seen her here and I have gone to her lodgings with her. She is horribly, dreadfully poor. That is all I know about her. She does not like to talk about herself, but I am sure she is in some way connected with the Cottles.'

'Curious! She reminded me—but that is absurd. The longer I stay in Bank Side, Miss Indagine, the more interesting the place becomes. Think how great must be the dignity of the Cottles since it will not suffer the Disgrace to be within walking distance. The Disgrace! She interests me greatly. May I be permitted—will you suffer me—to pay the poor thing's arrears of rent for her? Thank you very much. This poor Disgrace! Thank you very much. I have had a most delightful afternoon.

Everything was new to me. Cornelia's church: and the Disgrace: and the Body—I do hope the Body enjoyed the little change of having his panel opened. You will tell me, won't you, Miss Indagine?—about the Disgrace. Do not, please—I entreat you—do not let her want. Did you notice what a soft voice she had and what a sweet face? She reminded me—somehow—she made me think—of my own mother.'

CHAPTER VII

SUNDAY MORNING.

At a quarter before eleven on the Sunday morning there is wafted across the river the mingled cling-clang-clash of a hundred bells—made melodious by the soft influence of distance—from St. Dunstan's in the West to St. Dunstan's in the East or even St. George's, Ratcliffe. They call the London citizens to church, as they have called them for a thousand years. Alas! These citizens hear no more the pious call. Along the leafy lanes of Weybridge, on the breezy *chaussée* of Hampstead Heath, over the turf of Wimbledon, across the furzy common of Barnes, everywhere—all round London—they are moving Churchwards, obedient to the harsh tinkle of the little bell in the perky new suburban church: but the loud tongue of the sonorous City bell strikes not upon their ears.

On the South side also they are not without their bells. They ring out lustily from the pinnacles of St. Mary Overy, from the tall needle of Horselydown, from the squab tower of St. Tooley and from St. George of the merry Borough. They make all together—the bells of the City and the bells of the Borough—such a ringing, resonant, rolling consonation and concert of invitation, that one feels how mean and poor-spirited must be the creature who would refuse to enter a church after this magnificent overture, and how very much to be pitied is the poor Dissenter, who hath no part or share in it, and no such preliminary heart-awakener played for him on his way to Chapel. Yet the Churches—both of City and of Borough—are reported to be generally empty.

Laurence stood at the head of the stairs, gazing across the river. He was soothing his spirit in the manner customary to young men after breakfast. It may be observed that no opposition was now made to the profanation of the Academy by the use of the weed at any time. Suspicion of all kinds had wholly vanished. The lodger had subdued all hearts. Even the punch-bowl was restored to its place without anxiety: relations of a

truly fraternal character were established with the girls: this young man, in fact, carried so much cheerfulness about him that he could communicate some of it to everybody and never feel the loss. Cornelia herself regarded him with friendly eyes. But this morning his face, usually so cheerful, was touched with anxiety.

Beside him, on the wooden bench of that rough belvedere already spoken of, sat Cassie. She was so daintily dressed in her Sunday 'Things' that she ought to have felt and looked happy. Alas! a pretty bonnet and a becoming costume will cause a girl to forget a good many things—long hours of work, nagging, an empty purse, an insufficient dinner—but under certain afflictions even the consolations of dress fail. Cassie carried her prayer-book; presumably therefore she was going to Church, but she hardly looked as if the consolations of religion would greatly help her. Dark circles ringed her eyes: her soft cheeks were pale: her rosebud lips were set hard: her shapely head was drooping. These were signs of distress; of storm; perhaps of temper. Laurence glanced at her from time to time with anxious eyes, but said nothing. He was wise. If you want a girl to tell you a thing, leave it unquestioned. Then that thing will grow and swell up within her mind until it must be spoken and further reticence is impossible.

While the rolling and the riot of the bells were at their highest, Lucius came forth from the house. He was dressed in black, brushed with neatness. His father always showed his respect for Sunday by wearing black, and he was not the man to bring contempt upon his ancestors by changing any old customs. When George the Fourth was king, great merchants—ay, and great lawyers, both of the Higher and the Lower Branch—always went to church in black. The custom still survives on Bank Side and elsewhere. If, for instance, you watch a row of houses in the respectable suburb of Stratford or Mile End a little before Church time, you will presently observe a swarming of families in the direction of Church or Chapel: you will also observe that the head of each family is clothed from head to foot in black. This fashion, however, is going out: a few short years more and it will have vanished—gone to the limbo of all bygone fashions. With the Sunday black Lucius assumed an air of more individual responsibility and greater dignity. This is natural, and even praiseworthy. Man is a slave all the week: on Sunday he is free: he goes to Church as a voluntary act: he goes to his office or shop because he must. Besides, on Sunday he goes before the Lord of all, who will presently redress every injustice. This thought uplifts his heart and straightens his back.

'I trust, Mr. Waller,' he said, crossing the road, and looking

with visible apprehension at his daughter, 'that you go to Church. Some young men, I learn in Chambers—we in Chambers learn a great deal of the outer world—are conspicuous, lamentably conspicuous, for the neglect of that duty.'

Laurence replied briefly that at Sydney he went to Church regularly. He remarked that the manner of the little man betrayed a state of great nervous agitation. He naturally connected this with Cassie's stormy looks. The girl, for her part, at the appearance of her father, turned her head away and looked across the river. This gesture Laurence made haste to connect with a family row.

'My dear,' said Lucius, with apprehensive voice, 'your sister is now drawing on her gloves. You are also ready, I hope, for the . . . the calm and tranquillity of Church?'

Cassie made no reply. The wise man bows before the feminine mood: Lucius did not press the question. He turned to Laurence instead.

'To give,' he said, endeavouring to assume a judicial calm, 'moral support to the Establishment is the duty of every good Englishman. It was my father's unbending rule. For my own part, since the official connection of my sister with the Church of St. Leonard le Size, I have supported the Establishment by a weekly morning attendance there. The congregations are scanty, but the sermons appeal to the reason. I hope, Mr. Waller, that we may see you amongst us some day.'

He walked away without appearing to notice his daughter's defiant and rebellious attitude, delicately and carefully, as one who would not stain or spot his silver buckles or white silk stockings with the dust and mud of the road.

Then Flavia came out, buttoning her gloves and accompanied by her brother. She was dressed, like Cassie, in her best bonnet and her Sunday frock. They made Cassie look prettier, but they only made her look more prim and formal.

Sempronius ran across the road.

'Come along, Cass,' he said.

Cassie turned her shoulder again.

'You've had your flare-up,' said the horrid boy. 'Take and have done with it. What's the use of being cross with Flavia? She's done nothing.'

Cassie returned no reply. Then Flavia herself came across.

'Are you going to St. Leonard's, Flavia?' Laurence asked.

It will be observed that he had by this time arrived at the Christian name, which is a great step, and shows that confidence is firmly established. If you spend most of your evenings with friendly girls, and are yourself easy and sympathetic and ready to make advances, it is not difficult to arrive quickly at the Christian name.

'No, Mr. Waller, we are not going to St. Leonard's. Father goes because he makes himself believe that it is grand for Aunt Cornelia to be a pew-opener. We don't; we go to St. Saviour's. Come, Cassie, if you are going too, it is time to start.'

Cassie shook her head impatiently.

'Well—but you needn't keep in a temper.'

'Leave her alone, Flavia,' said Laurence. 'Go on to church and we will join you presently.'

'I've got to call for Althea. You can follow if you like.'

'Oh! If Miss Indagine goes with you——'

'Of course,' said Flavia, not lightly, but seriously, 'if she is going you will go too.' She walked away before Laurence fully understood what the meaning of her words might be. But they brought a slight suffusion to his cheek.

Then the bells left off ringing and a sweet silence fell upon the Bank. All those who go to church were by this time within the sacred walls. Those who do not go to church—it is said these unhappy persons are in the majority—were lying in bed. Those who live in the Liberty of the Clink and its vicinity mostly lie in bed all Sunday morning. Whether they go to church in the evening or not is doubtful. Perhaps, in the great ugly barracks of Red Cross Street, where so many thousands are bestowed, there are House or College Chapels where they hold services of prayer and praise. Otherwise one fears——. However, Bank Side at the hour of Morning Prayer is as quiet as if St. Saviour's was crammed and the walls of all the Dissenting Chapels were bulging with pressure of worshippers.

Laurence knocked out the ashes of his pipe.

'Cassie, old chap,' he said, 'there's been a shindy of some sort, I perceive.'

'It was all my fault,' she burst out. 'Oh! I've got such a horrid temper. But I didn't mean what I said. They ought to know that I didn't mean it. Oh, I'm so miserable that I don't know what I did say.'

'Come, you promised last night that you'd tell me all about it. Better tell me than fly in a rage with your own people. Flavia has done nothing, as Sempronius said.'

She hung her head and made no reply.

'Isn't it better to have it out with me than to spoil their pleasure at home?'

She was still silent.

'I'm as hard as nails. Hit me and hammer me. I shan't mind. If you feel like it, box my ears. Nobody's looking.'

She shook her head.

'Well, then, if you won't tell me anything, shall we get up and go to church with the others? But church in such a frame of mind as this . . . really, Cassie.'

The girl had risen when he proposed to go to church. Now she sat down again and burst into tears.

'The air is fresh this morning, and the sun is warm,' said Laurence, looking another way. 'It is, perhaps, better for us to be here than in church, particularly if you are going to talk to me. St. Paul's looks splendid in the sunshine. If you come to think of it, there isn't a better place for a quiet talk in the whole of London than Bank Side on a fine summer morning, is there? Nobody to disturb us: a comfortable bench, which might be cleaner, to sit down upon: a fine warm air: and the river at our feet.'

Cassie went on sobbing and crying, regardless of Wren's masterpiece and ungrateful for the sunshine.

'I don't know,' Laurence continued, unheeding, 'whether I don't prefer this sunshine to the moonlight. Of course——' He went on talking as if the girl was in that mood for sympathetic listening which makes women who can command it so dangerous to unprotected man. 'Of course, Cassie, I shall always think that the sunset is the finest time for Bank Side, especially when two goddesses come down from Heaven in a golden shell. Last night the moon was riding in great splendour over the river, wasn't she? I mean when I came out at ten, and found you leaning over the wall and looking at it.'

She made no reply; but she left off crying and dried her eyes.

'That is,' he explained, 'you were not looking at it; you were crying into the river, just as you are doing now. It made a dangerously high tide, this morning. Cassie, my child, you promised to tell me all about it—you know you did. You said you would tell me this very morning; whereas, on the contrary, instead of having it over first and crying over it afterwards, you have been mixing up the proper order. You've sent your father to church all of a tremble, as they say, and you've bullied your inoffensive sister. Come, Cassie' (he laid a fraternal hand on hers), 'all the week through you've been miserable, pretending to be jolly when you fancied a fellow was looking at you——'

'I thought,' said Cassie simply, 'that you only had eyes for Althea.'

'Why do you think that?' Laurence asked, a blush upon his manly cheek.

'You are always with her. You go out upon the river together: you walk with her: you spend your evenings with her at home: you follow her with your eyes——'

'Yes—yes—enough said, Cassie.'

'How can anybody wonder?'

'Anybody wonder?' he echoed.

'There isn't in the whole world,' said Cassie loyally, 'another such a girl as Althea.'

'I begin to be quite certain that there isn't. In fact—I've been quite certain for some little time. There, Cassie—you have my secret: give me your own in exchange.'

'My own—my secret. Oh! It is nothing. It is not worth telling.'

'You are in trouble,' he said. 'Have you told Flavia?'

'No.'

'Nor Althea?'

'No. I have told Althea——' she paused. 'I have told Althea—what was not the truth.'

'Perhaps if you tell me exactly what you told her I shall be able to reverse the statement and so get at the truth.'

'I cannot tell you. Oh!'—she burst into tears once more. 'I am so miserable—so dreadfully unhappy. I wish I could die. I never thought I would be so unhappy. And nobody can help—nobody—not even you—though you seem to be helping everybody—Mr. Indagine and all.'

'Cannot I help you too?'

'No—no.'

'I must guess then. Listen, Cassie, and tell me if I am right. There was once a girl—a very pretty girl she was—very pretty indeed—like you in that respect.' Cassie smiled through her tears—a weak, wan, December smile. 'She lived just as you do in a—a—yes—a romantic house beside the river far from the usual haunts of people, so that she had very few friends. She belonged, like you, to a most respectable family. Her father, just like yours—was a lawyer—in the Higher Branch—a Barrister.'

'Father is a Barrister's clerk,' said Cassie.

'Oh!' This discovery was a blow even harder to bear than the discovery of Cornelia's real relations with the Church. A barrister's clerk! So much dignity: such a carriage: such conversation: such an eighteenth-century manner—and only a clerk—a barrister's clerk! It seemed impossible. Cornelia was in the Church—a pew-opener in the Church. Lucius was in the Law—in the Higher Branch—a clerk in the Higher Branch. Where was the family greatness? But there remained the Prophetess. He would still hope something from the Prophetess.

'To be sure'—he dissimulated the weight of the blow—'I meant Barrister's clerk. Like your father, I said, in the Higher Branch. That, you see, was the point of similarity. In the Higher Branch. As for respectability, this girl, like you, actually had a grandfather. The ghost of her grandfather—so great was their respectability—still lingered on the scene of his former family happiness. At night he sat upon the chest of drawers in the Best Bedroom, and if any fellow smoked a pipe in the room

he used to cough and say "Tcheehee! Tcheehee! You violate the Sanctity of the Academy."'

Cassie looked uncertain whether she ought to laugh. Was it possible to laugh at her grandfather—Vicesimus Cottle?

'In a street near theirs was a house to which a young man belonged'—Cassie here coloured violently—'a dark-haired young man—a very remarkable young man to look at—he had a clever face, with very bright black eyes. And the young man cast eyes of admiration upon this pretty girl and presently told her that he loved her—that he loved her,' Laurence repeated. 'So far it is a beautiful story, because the girl began to love him in return and to think about him a great deal—I dare say all day and night. Then he gave her presents, just to mark his love, and promised fidelity, and went away. He was abroad—how long?'

'Six month,' Cassie murmured.

'He was absent for six months. Then he came back to London and got an appointment and did something fine which made people talk of him and expect great things of him. So that the girl grew prouder of him every day.'

'Every day,' Cassie murmured.

'And he seemed to love her as much as ever.'

'At first, as much as ever,' she repeated.

'Which, of course, was not to be wondered at, because she was a girl so pretty and so good. He wrote her beautiful letters, not only while he was away, but also after he came home.'

'Oh! he did—he did—the most beautiful letters you can imagine.'

'And then—then,' Laurence hesitated, 'he grew less affectionate. Gradually. She did not observe it at first—by degrees.'

'No—no—no,' Cassie cried, 'it was not by degrees: it was suddenly. Oh! there was no sign of any change. It was all of a sudden—without any warning at all. He loved me in the evening and in the morning he loved me no longer. What had I done—what had I done—to make such a change?'

'Nothing at all.'

'In the evening he held my hand in his and kissed me and wouldn't let me go, and the next day he wrote me a cruel dreadful letter, saying that it was all a mistake, and as for love, he found he had been quite wrong, because he did not love me at all. That was a week ago. Now you know why I have looked miserable. And oh! oh! Mr. Waller, what could I have done or said to break off all his love for me in a single moment?'

'Nothing at all,' he said a second time.

'He did love me—I saw it in his eyes—I felt it when he touched me. How *can* a man love a girl in the evening and hate her in the morning?'

'He cannot,' said Laurence.

'Could anyone have told him anything? But there was nothing to tell. And I have no enemies. If we have no friends, we have no enemies. There is not a single person who would do me a mischief—I am certain there is not.'

'No one has done you a mischief, except the man himself, Cassie.'

'Oh, I am so miserable. I cannot tell anybody. I am afraid to tell Flavia. No one can help me. It is so shameful—so dreadful—to be thrown away like a thing you want no more. And he will never—never—never love me again.'

'If I were you,' said Laurence, 'since the man has acted like a blackguard'—the girl winced as if she had been struck with a whip—'a blackguard, I say,—best face the truth—I would put him out of my mind altogether.' This he said ignorant of woman's heart.

'I cannot—oh! I cannot. And please don't call him hard names. It hurts me even that you should think hardly of him. Though he will never love me again—never—never—never.'

Laurence looked across the river with great determination, trying to fix his eyes—which were a little hazy, no doubt with the freshness of the breeze—on the golden cross of St. Paul's.

'My dear child,' he said presently, 'I guessed what was going on. As for the reason—there can be but one. Has Oliver transferred his valuable affections to someone else?' He remembered the comedietta seen from the Bridge. 'Has he told the same tale to another girl?'

'No—no. He thinks of nothing but his Laboratory and his science. He only told me—oh! it was cruel—that I could console myself with—— I cannot say it.'

'Was it with me, Cassie? That was—bad form'—his face betrayed a stronger phrase. 'Very bad form indeed. Poor little girl! I am very sorry. If you think that he was jealous——'

'No—no—no. He was not jealous. Nobody could be jealous when you only have eyes for Althea.'

'What did you tell Althea?'

'She suspected something—I don't know why'—lovers are exactly like the fabled bird of the desert who hides his head in the sand and thinks himself invisible—'and she asked me, and I told her a falsehood. I said that nothing had passed between Oliver and me.'

'Does no one know at home?'

She shook her head. There had been no signs, of course—nothing at all—which should make her sister suspect. No walks with Oliver in the evening: no tell-tale glances: no blushes:

and now no tears and misery. Of course no one suspected and no one knew.

I suppose that Laurence was too young and inexperienced to know how great a disaster had fallen upon this unfortunate damsel. If a woman throws over her lover he recovers in time from his rage and disappointment and discovers that there are other women in the world quite as good as the one who has refused him. It is only in the penny novelette that a man hurls himself to the devil because a woman throws him over. Nor indeed, in a similar position, does a woman die of a broken heart. She lives. But she is wounded and the scars do not heal. She never finds another completely to take the place of the one who has deserted her. She promised herself to him: she gave him her heart: she showed to him the secrets of her soul: she took the image and thought of him into her mind, thinking that they would dwell there all her life: she loved the man, apart from the accidents of his comeliness, his strength, his genius, his birth, his reputation: he was the one man in all the world to her: whatever he might do, whether he should succeed or whether he should fail, mattered only to her so far as it should make him happy or miserable: it was enough for her that the man loved her: for her he was white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand: his head as the most fine gold: his mouth most sweet: yea, altogether lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem! To a woman there is no misery in the world more dreadful: there is no blow of fate more bitter: than the loss of her lover. He loves her no more: then she is no longer beautiful, no longer sweet: her very self-respect is torn from her: all her future—the splendid sunlit mist which wraps the future of a girl who has a lover—is destroyed: she is no longer one of the happy and endless procession which walks two by two across the stage of Life: yet she has left the crowd of maidens who wait together for their lovers: and she must now walk alone. Alas! poor Cassie!

Laurence began to whisper such words of consolation as he could find. What words? What consolation? The girl was bereaved. In bereavement who can console? The Art of Consolation has not yet been discovered. Nothing can console, unless it be forgetfulness: wherefore the bottle, in some cases—but this is elementary. We look for an anæsthetic of the heart under which we shall suffer bereavement without pain and lie sleeping till the sharpness and agony are overpast. 'I cannot bear it,' cries the widow. 'Then, Madam,' says the physician, 'what will you do?' 'He has left me: he loves me no longer: I cannot bear it,' said Cassie. 'Then, child,' said Laurence, what will you do?'

Well: but only to cry out is something: to tell somebody

else is a relief: to weep in solitude is to shed tears of rage and despair. If anybody will explain why Cassie found a greater relief in confessing to a brand-new friend and that a young man, than in confessing to her old friend Althea or to her sister, he will throw fresh light upon the female character.

They sat together on the shabby old bench among the barges and the heaps of scrap-iron and the cranes. Laurence told stories, all out of his own head, concerning the folly of girls who continue to think of men after they have proved themselves worthless: how their youth is wasted in melancholy and their age consumed by regrets: and of the wickedness of bestowing continued love upon men who do not deserve that supreme gift, and how to youth such love brings no happiness and to age it brings repentance. No one would believe that so young a man could be so eloquent on such a theme. Hard it is upon the historian that he cannot spare the space for so admirable a discourse. Unhappily it produced no effect—not the least in the world. Cassie loved this man: it is the way of a woman. Solomon himself could not understand it: and it was too wonderful even for Agur the son of Jakeh. She loved the man whether he was worthless or not. She would gladly have arisen to go forth with him to the ends of the world, even if he went on getting worse and worse. She would love him and be unhappy—yet less unhappy than if she had been separated from him. Therefore, Laurence spoke as one that beateth the air.

Then he changed his line and spoke of Time—Time the Healer. He called it Time the Healer. It is a very old commonplace and it is not at all true. Time cannot heal anything. Time can only destroy. Time destroys regrets and remembrance and kindliness and affection: just as the dentist deadens the nerve. Time at last destroys the scars—when he destroys the frame itself.

But, even while Laurence discoursed, an image grew up in the girl's mind which soothed if it did not console her: it was suggested by the mention of Time as a Physician: she figured herself, in the distant future, a sad and interesting creature: bowed down with the weight of that one sorrow: she thought she should never be able to lose that sorrow: she saw herself nursing her grief: she saw her own drooping frame and heavy head—and the thought of the misery to come consoled the misery of the present.

About half-past eleven the poet came forth in his brown velvet jacket and his felt hat. But his head was lifted proudly and his shoulders were no longer bent: in imagination he was standing alone in the centre of the world, with the eyes of a boundless multitude upon him: a multitude composed of every race who speak the Saxon tongue: they gazed upon him,

pointed at him, and applauded him. Laurence, to whom he kindly nodded, was but one of this crowd. He walked through a lane of imaginary admirers with firm step and countenance unmoved till he came to the Bridge Stairs. Then he left the Bank and was joined on the Bridge by the Chevalier, with whom he walked every Sunday morning, after this official had peeled the potatoes and taken the Sunday dinner to the bake-house.

When St. Paul's struck a quarter-past twelve Cassie got up and said she would go to meet them coming out of church. She led Laurence to the end of Bank Street, where once stood the noble House of Winchester, though the street is called after the ancient Clink. It is the narrowest and the deepest street in the whole of London: it is like a long mine underground, or a deep and dark cañon in the rock: bridges cross it: warehouses rise on either hand: if a cart comes along the passenger must turn and fly: if two carts meet one must be backed out. There is a damp and sour smell in it which never leaves the street even on the Sunday. Close to the end of it is the ancient port beside which stood the little chapel before the Normans came and made their great monastery and built St. Mary Overy's Church, now called St. Saviour's.

On Sunday they have swept up and cleaned the market-place in front of the church, but there still lingers in the air the fragrance of crushed cabbage-stalks, bruised onions, pea-shucks, decaying apples and the like. But the place is quiet. Cassie went to the south door leading into the church, and they waited beside the monument of the illustrious Lockyer—the man of the Pill—until the others should come out.

'Have I said anything—anything at all, Cassie, to comfort and to help you?'

'No,' she replied, truthfully, 'nothing at all. But you are kind. If I had not told someone I think I must have gone mad.'

'Won't you tell Althea?'

'Oh, no, no! I want to tell no one. Let it all be forgotten. Hush! there is the organ. They will come out now.'

Then the scanty congregation came out of the church: Althea and Flavia by the steps which lead from the new nave to the ancient transept; and they walked home together—Laurence beside Flavia, Cassie with Althea—through the narrow and winding ways. By this time the residents of Red Cross Street were up and dressed and collecting in the street against the opening of the Houses, so that the beauty of the day seemed gone. But Cassie was tranquil again, the first paroxysm of impatience over. Flavia observed this result and glanced anxiously at the face of her companion, not daring to ask what

he had been told. The face was graver than was customary on account of this communication. She thought it was because Laurence was considering what was best to be done—having by this time perfect confidence in his power to do something. It was in the nature of this young man to inspire vast confidence. Something! It is the word which Hope always whispers in the ear—fond, foolish, sympathetic Hope! You have lost your place; there is only a month or so between yourself and starvation. Hope whispers, 'Something will turn up. Be of good cheer.' You are ruined. 'Heart up,' says Hope, 'something will happen.' Your disease grows worse: your case is well-nigh desperate. 'Courage,' says Hope. 'Something will be found for you. That is not Azrael whose wing you hear. It is the guardian angel who brings you health.'

But Laurence was not thinking what should be done. In such a case nothing can be done. The exhibition of the common cow-hide would only make the offender hate the girl with a more bitter hatred. Nothing could be done. But he was wondering what Oliver meant by it. Always he saw before him that little drama that was played below the bridge; and his face hardened and his eyes glared only to think that Althea—Althea—Althea—should be wooed by this young expounder of the latest and the worst Philosophy—the most despairing and the most destructive.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUNDAY EVENING.

It was on the evening of this memorable day that Laurence first saw Claudia—who prophesied. Her name, he found, was not often mentioned in the family circle, because religious opinion separated her from her sister. Cornelia—the thing was due to her official position—could not in decency recognise Dissent in any form, nor could she encourage any religious Function which is not conducted according to the formularies of the Church of England. Now there is no form of prayer prescribed for those who prophesy. None has survived from the time of the early Church. The other members of the household, including her brother Lucius, regarded the Prophetess with a certain pride: notwithstanding the originality and daring of her opinion, she sustained and even advanced the greatness of the family. Flavia, indeed, went farther. This young woman, who possessed the desirable gift of independence, openly maintained the doctrine that the New Testament Believers' Borough

Branch—led by her Aunt Claudia—could not be dislodged from their position by any arguments. They had, in fact, repeatedly challenged argument, and as the challenge was never taken up even by the clergy of the parish, it was clear that no one was able to answer them. She therefore attended the Chapel every Sunday evening, and looked confidently for a time when the gift of prophecy should be bestowed, as in early days, upon all believers. She also attended the tea parties, lectures, confessions of experience, prayer meetings, and the other gatherings by which the life of the community was sustained.

It is obviously the first duty of every Sect, Church, Connection or Persuasion to establish on a firm basis its claim to possess the Truth. Fortunately, no Church has ever been started which could not prove so much, at least, with the greatest ease. If one thinks of it, there is not a single Sect whose position is not absolutely impregnable. Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Bible Christian, Jezreelite, Quaker, Shaker—every one dwells in a strong fortress, in which he is secure from every enemy. When the faithful are fully persuaded of this comfortable fact, it is the next business of the leaders to reward their followers by providing for them emotions various and pleasing, excitement, and fraternal love—which last often deepens into something deeper, and even changes its character altogether. Perhaps it was this side of the chapel which attracted Flavia. Her life was narrow and dull: her work at St. Martin's over, there was nothing at all left for the rest of the day. She was not a girl who could find her chief amusement in reading, and there were no books to read except those borrowed by her brother. Like most girls who have thrown over the domestic life, she could not sit down every evening to sew and make things in linen and flannel, nor could she find absolute happiness in the decoration of an old hat with new ribbons: she had no lover, nor did any thoughts of love enter into her head. The dulness of her life was only an unfelt force: it did not weigh upon her: she was not actively discontented: but the Chapel offered her a change. Heavens! how great a change! It opened for her the gates of the New Jerusalem that she might look through, though as yet she might not enter. Here she felt the yearning after the unknown, the rapture of the foretaste, the sense of special guidance—which may, and does, fall upon the humblest Chapel member as fully as upon the most saintly recluse of the cave, or upon the most illustrious princess in the most splendid cloister. In the morning she went to Church with her sister: it was part of her routine: besides, she was not above the gratification of sitting in her Sunday best among other people also in Sunday best. But in the evening she sought the Chapel of Huldah the Prophetess.

Flavia was accompanied every Sunday evening by no less a

personage than the Chevalier. This exile was not only a rebel to his King but to his Church. Concerning both he held such views and used such figures of speech as are common among rebels. In the humble connection of the New Testament Believers, in the little Chapel where they met, in the lowly company there gathered together, the Professor of the New Humanity saw a return to Primitive Christianity, a spark of light in the darkness which should spread and grow until it should illumine the whole world, the Hope of the future, the Salvation of mankind. The other disciples knew themselves to be the one little flock in All the World who held the Truth: it was enough for them. This revolutionary saw a great deal more. Here all were equal to begin with: there was no authority: they had no creed: they were governed by no laws: they all had in their hands the Acts of the Apostles—the work on which, as everybody knows, the Connection chiefly bases its opinions—and could read and judge for themselves. Such a religion, pure, democratic, free, suits such a Social order as the Chevalier burned to establish.

It was strange: the man who had spent the best years of his life in conspiring for the overthrow of Governments, the downfall and death of Kings, the destruction of Church, Property, Rank, and distinction, in company with the murderous, treacherous self-seeking reptiles who are always attracted by conspiracy and the hope of plunder: who cared nothing for bloodshed if only his schemes could succeed: who had fought on barricades and shot down his enemies without any subsequent pang of remorse: who still, after forty years had passed, and at seventy years of age, would rather have had presented to him the Hapsburg's head upon a charger than any gift of worldly goods: who was of a proud and ancient family: who had consorted with gentlefolk and scholars: now walked humbly and in rags beside this humble London girl, to a little Chapel whose worshippers were the lowliest of all those who read and think for themselves. No greater contrast could be imagined than that of the pair thus walking together: the old man with his white locks, his soft mild eyes and gentle manner, his ragged coat and flat cloth cap, and with all these memories clinging to him, beside the girl so neat, so proper, so ostentatiously respectable—Cornelia would have said so genteel, but the word is falling into disuse.

'We are going to Aunt Claudia's Chapel, Mr. Waller,' said Flavia. 'Will you come too?'

Laurence hesitated. He had entertained visions of a dinner at a West End Restaurant; after an occasional dip into the West End one returns with renewed heart to the simplicity of Bank Side: Sunday evening is not lively among the barges: he had spent three nights running with the poet and Althea and

could hardly in decency go there again for a day or two: and all day long Cassie's words about his wandering eyes had been in his mind: he wanted to get away alone and to ask himself solemnly what it meant and whether he really—and whether she had the least suspicion—and what his mother would say—and so on. In times of difficulty one always longs for this solitary colloquy with self, and it never, never, never comes off, because it is so difficult to place our own affairs before ourselves plainly, without deception or illusion—and when a man resolves his hardest to take a calm and dispassionate view of the position he only succeeds in falling into dreams.

'Come with us,' Flavia repeated.

'Sir,' said the Chevalier, 'if you stay at Bank Side without witnessing its chief glory you do yourself an injustice.'

Laurence wished to do an injustice to no man, least of all to himself. He hesitated no longer.

'The New Humanity,' said the Chevalier, 'demands a reformed religion. Primitive Christianity alone is able to satisfy its aspirations and its wants. You do not know perhaps,' he added in the sweetest and softest voice possible, a voice of velvet, 'that the little Fraternity of our Chapel is the revival of that sweet and holy religion.'

'No, I did not know it,' said Laurence. 'Are you, too, Chevalier, a disciple?'

'I, too. After many years. I have lived a philosopher: I shall die a Christian. In my youth, like many others, I confounded the false with the true: your cathedrals, your Bishops, your priests—they are not Christianity. What that is—we will show you.'

'Does your sister go with you, Flavia?'

'No. She is crying in her own room. But she is not cross any more. You said something to her, Mr. Waller, that took away her temper. Althea has been with her this afternoon, but she will not tell Althea anything—or me either. As if we did not know, Chevalier!' She turned to her companion with that smile of bitter sweet triumph that a woman assumes when she has found out a secret.

'Yes, we know,' said the Chevalier.

'In that case,' said Laurence, 'we all know it, and so we need not say anything more.'

'I have observed the face of that young man,' said the Chevalier, without naming him. 'I, who have lived among men of action, have studied many faces, and I have never yet been deceived by any face. The traitor I know, the flatterer also: the luxurious man and the self-indulgent: the liar and the heartless—I know them all. This young man has a bad face. He is false and treacherous: he is selfish: he has no pity.'

'The last illusion which will perish,' Laurence remembered, 'is the illusion which we call love.'

Flavia set her lips and nodded her head vindictively. If Mr. Oliver Luttrel should ever fall into the hands of this young woman, Laurence thought, there would be a bad quarter of an hour for him. A political prisoner among the Carthaginian ladies after they had sharpened their nails would not have had a more unpleasant time.

The Chapel of the New Testament Believers is called by some the Upper Chamber and by some the House of Consolation, and among some it has a more sacred name still which may be left to the brethren. It is such a Chapel as may be met with everywhere in the poorer quarters: small, ugly, with a little window over the door and another window, round headed, at the end. It stands in Union Street, which is better known than most of the Southwark streets, because one must pass through Union Street in order to reach Red Cross Street, where there is the most charming little settlement, or Colony, of culture and sweetness in all London, not excepting the Brewers' Garden at the back of the London Hospital.

The Chapel was furnished with benches half filled with people: at the end was a low platform with a harmonium. Flavia and the Chevalier sat down near the door, nodding to some of the congregation. They all turned and gazed at the stranger in some astonishment. A well-dressed stranger does not often visit the Upper Chamber. Presently, one among them rose and advanced to him bearing a little bundle of tracts in his hands. He was a man of meek and gentle appearance and bright eyes.

'Read them,' he whispered earnestly. 'They are intended for the Inquirers. You will see that our position is one that cannot be shaken. And they know it.' He jerked his head to the right, perhaps he meant those of Westminster Abbey, or those of Lambeth Palace: but he did not explain. 'Do not,' he added, 'resist the power of Truth. Let your heart be open to the voice of Truth.'

Just then the door opened and a woman appeared dressed in black silk. Upon her head was a kind of black mantilla which fell over her like a veil. She stood at the door for a moment and pushed back her veil with her hands, looking round the room as if to observe who were present. Her eyes fell upon Laurence and she started. Why did she start? Then the veil fell over her face again and she walked up the Chapel and mounted the platform, taking her seat in an armchair in the middle facing the congregation. This was Claudia. She was curiously like her sister Cornelia, yet with a difference. She had the family nose, but it was softened, so to speak, by a

reduction in length and breadth. She was small of stature, like the rest of the family, but she was not stiff and angular like Cornelia. Although she was now fifty years of age she was still pleasant to look upon: her features were mobile: her hair was abundant and was rolled up in a kind of crown: her eyes were large and lustrous: they should therefore have been sleepy eyes: but on the contrary they were curiously bright and keen. These observations were made during the short space when she stood in the door and looked round the Chapel: after the veil was dropped again her face was invisible.

Felix Laverock came into the Chapel after his mother. At the sight of Laurence he dropped into the farthest corner, hanging his head with every sign of confusion. Apparently, therefore, the gift of the mother had not also been granted to the son. Then the service began. There was a small desk at one side of the platform and a harmonium at the other.

The nonconformist service is always much the same whatever Truths are preached. They sing hymns: read and expound the Scriptures: the minister offers a long prayer: and then followeth the sermon.

In this case the sermon was not one of fire and wrath, but of praise and faith: with simple and homely experiences: it was preached by one who, like a Quaker, spoke because he thought he had something to say. When he sat down another rose and said what was in his heart: and then another. Meantime the prophetess sat in the chair, motionless, her lace veil hiding her face, her hands in her lap. She did not sing with them: she seemed as if she did not pray with them. Laurence could not keep his eyes from her. He was affected with a strange sense of incongruity. How did this woman come here? She should have been wrapped in a peplum and been attached to the oracle of Delphi. So dumb, so still, so regardless of the folk, may have sat the priestess before the oracle was given.

Then he discovered, while the speakers poured out the thankfulness and joy of their hearts, that the people all seemed to have the same kind of eyes. No doubt there were grey, blue, brown and black eyes among the people: but their eyes were all curiously bright. This kind of brightness goes with the variety of faith which scoffing would call credulity. It is the brightness of enthusiasm. Every crank has such eyes. You will see it in the leaders of mobs as well as in the Captains of the Salvation Army.

The last speaker left the beaten path of personal experience in order to consider the position of the Church—their Church. The discourse was clearly intended for the stranger within the gates, because the speaker looked at Laurence, and the people

turned round and gazed at him to see how he would receive the Truth: whether he would take it fighting, or whether he would fall prostrate under its mighty influence and own that never before had he known what was the Truth or where that article was to be obtained. If he had been the Prince of Wales himself this stranger could not have been the object of greater curiosity.

The position, in fact, of the New Testament Believers is exactly that of the Primitive Church as described in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The speaker pointed this out with great care. As in those days of simplicity and faith, so in the Connection all were equal—the brethren did look as if the average weekly wage was from thirty-five shillings to two pounds a week. As in the Early days, so in the Connection, if one were to grow rich—the thing seemed too remote to affect the imagination of the hearers—he would divide his wealth among all. There was true brotherly love among them—where else outside the Connection could that be found? They had no creed or formula, but all was done by faith. They had no priests, but all were equal. And as to the gift of Prophecy and Tongues, where, outside the Connection, could it be found at all —oh! where else—where else—than in this humble Chapel of a few chosen believers, snatched from the wilderness of the unbelieving world?

Flavia and the Chevalier nodded approvingly as each point was made. When it came to the last Felix in his corner contorted his limbs and hung his head.

Then the harmonium played a few chords and the people began to sing, sitting in their places, a long chaunting monotonous hymn, which rose and fell, verse by verse, and produced a most strange effect upon one at least of the gathering. Laurence felt as if he were being mesmerised, or were inhaling laughing gas. Already he felt his head swim, his limbs tremble, his senses reel. Then the people sang their hymn louder and faster, and they caught hands and stood up, and some swayed their bodies to and fro in rhythm like children at a musical drill: and some leaped and some wept aloud and some laughed. The harmonium, meantime, kept playing a monotonous droning accompaniment. The prophetess sat motionless.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet.

Then the music stopped and the people became silent and sank down upon the benches, panting, gasping, eager for the voice of Prophecy.

The woman tossed back her veil over her shoulders and threw out her arms.

. . . . . .

It lasted for ten minutes. It flowed like a cascade after

rain: it was turbulent in its headlong rapidity. It seemed to issue from the lips but not from the brain: in this way the ancient priestess was wont to deliver the oracle as if it came not from herself. It was full of ejaculations and of Scripture phrases. It seemed to uplift the souls of those who listened with open mouth and kindling eyes: it filled them with rapture. As for Laurence, he was like one who reads a book of spiritualism and finds here a phrase and there an idea which he comprehends, and presently lays down the volume and looks around and discovers that he is, after all, in a world of sense and of touch. Nothing that the prophetess uttered touched him: it was unlike anything he had ever heard: he was bewildered. But the mesmeric feeling left him when the singing ceased. The gift of Prophecy! what had she prophesied? It is not, we know, the gift of foretelling, but of outspeaking. What had she outspoken? He could seize on nothing.

The Prophetess! This remarkable person—could she really be a daughter of Vicesimus and a sister of Lucius, Cornelia, and the unfortunate Julia? Could she really belong to that respectable family? She was utterly thrown away in this obscure corner of the city. She should have taken a West End Chapel and started a new Church for the rich instead of for the poor. There are always so many rich people in search of a new Gospel that the revival of the early Church could not fail of success. A new Gospel for the Rich has not, in fact, been attempted since the Foundation, now fifty years ago, of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of St. Irving. In the Borough her gifts were thrown away. Who careth for the religion of Bank Side? Who concerneth himself with the tendencies of Southwark? A remarkable woman. If a charlatan, then one of the finest water. If an enthusiast, then filled with enthusiasm of a most uncommon kind. A truly remarkable woman.

She stopped as suddenly as she began, sitting down and drawing the veil again over her face. The people began to sing another hymn—of praise and gladness.

When the hymn was finished the Prophetess arose again, but quietly, and threw back her veil.

'A portion for Brother De Heyn,' she said, softly. 'Hast thou said in thy heart, it is vain to serve the Lord?'

The congregation regarded Brother De Heyn with admiration and envy. He had received a special message.

The Chevalier himself, however, bowed his head stricken with remorse. There had been grumblings with his lot. Rebellious thoughts had truly troubled his soul in his thankless drudgery of the week.

'A portion for Sister Flavia. Be angry for thy sister's sake, but sin not. Leave transgressors to the Arm of the Lord.'

The tears came into Flavia's eyes.

Then the Prophetess looked straight before her. But Laurence started and changed colour at her next words :—

'A portion for the child of Lucy.' What did she mean? 'Thou art come from the Isles of the East where is the land of Ophir. Peace be upon thee and a blessing. Amen—Amen.'

The congregation stared. Who was the child of Lucy? Was this a dark saying like unto those riddles which in Bunyan's story cheered the heart of Mansoul?

Then they sang another hymn, a hymn of dismissal, while the saucer went round and the pennies rattled. He who carried the saucer counted out the money when he had finished, and entered the amount in a little book. Then he gave it all to Felix, who slipped it into his pocket with a blush of shame. Laurence now understood why he came to the chapel—his mother it was who ran this little chapel and paid the rent and the gas, and he himself was Paymaster, Clerk or Assistant Treasurer, though not as yet numbered with the Faithful.

'And how on earth,' Laurence asked himself, 'did the Prophetess know me? Child of Lucy—of course she could mean none but me.'

CHAPTER IX.

'LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE.'

WHEN one is quite young, many opinions are strongly impressed upon the mind which have afterwards to be modified or abandoned. For instance, we used to be taught by certain allegorical pictures that at some definite moment—say when one had arrived at the great age of eighteen—a choice would be offered us—a choice for life—an alternative. It would be quite clear and plain: there would be no mistake at all about it: on the one hand a broad and flowery road presented to our consideration, down which thoughtless young people would be running hand in hand, laughing, singing, drinking champagne, and having the finest time possible, so that everyone would envy their happiness. On the other hand a narrow and rocky path beset with thorns. But we knew very well which we should choose: for, look you! the benevolent angel who offered this choice would also show us the end of the flowery road which these cheerful young people could not see—otherwise they might have gone on dancing and singing where they were, but they would certainly have gone no further. For it ended in a flaming portal, and on either side there was a dancing devil with a pitchfork, enjoying

the pleasures of anticipation, grinning to think how these light-hearted young people would very soon begin to laugh on the other side of their mouths—the inside, I suppose. Also, over the rocky path the angel would show that there were hovering other most lovely angels. We never had the least doubt which we should choose. In those days we also considered that the older one grew, the wiser we should be, the more virtuous, the stronger and clearer in vision, the better able to see the Kingdom of Heaven itself, and the open gates of the New Jerusalem. Now, alas! these beliefs have undergone profound changes. As regards the young man's choice, for instance, we have learned that it is offered him every day all through his life, though doubtless there are some days when the choice is of greater importance.

A chance or choice was one day presented to Oliver Luttrel. Unfortunately it was not granted unto him to behold the dancing devils at the end of the road. Indeed, in making his choice, he really did not understand that he should meet this disagreeable pair at the close of his journey: he thought that this road, like the other, would lead him to a certain arm-chair much in the thoughts of ambitious youth—the Presidential Chair of the Royal Society. Everything now leads to a Chair. Fame, while she blows her trumpet, bears aloft a Chair instead of a Crown. It has got arms and a high back. Sometimes it is a Presidential Chair—that of the Royal Academy, Royal Society, Geographical or other learned Corporation: sometimes it is a Bishop's Throne: sometimes it has a woolsack upon it: sometimes it is a Judge's Chair of State. Sometimes it is nothing but a plain Windsor Chair—one remembers the sight of an empty arm-chair which once brought tears to the eyes of all who speak the English tongue. Never a laurel wreath any more. There is one advantage in the exchange: the laurel crown was sometimes spiky and too often a misfit. I say, then, that Oliver, when he made his choice, thought that he was in no way hindering or interfering with the career he had set before himself. As if the Chair of Honour was ever to be reached along the road where those foolish virgins dance!

The serpent tempted him. The serpent came in the shape of his brother, the man upon town, bookmaker, gamester, rook. This gay and gallant brother, handsome, well groomed and dressed, with his pockets full of money, dragged him out of the quiet routine of his laborious days and took him into the Kingdom of Misrule. Most young men at six-and-twenty have seen enough of this realm to know that it is not for them. In the case of Oliver, a youth spent in hard work and the nurture of ambitions: three or four years in the Laboratory of a quiet German University: little society with other young Englishmen:

left him inexperienced in the ways of Queen Luxuria. He was not a cynic, because to be a cynic one must affect experience if one hath it not. If he knew not the seamy side of that world, he knew not its attractions.

Suddenly he was plunged into the very inner ring of this world, where everybody seemed brimful of happiness, everybody seemed rich, nobody had apparently anything to do but to sing and dance and feast and laugh.

Consider. This was a great change from the quiet life of the Laboratory. And in every man there is a sleeping devil.

Consider again. His own people—his brother and sister—astonished and dazzled him. Julia—the divine Giulia—formerly Sal—who could approach her for beauty and for careless prodigal generosity? And his brother—formerly Pharaoh—once in rags—Oliver remembered of the former life nothing but the rags—there was no one, even among his own friends—to Oliver they appeared to be friends—who could compare with him for looks or for cleverness. He was a man of many accomplishments: he could play the fiddle or the banjo or the piano: he could sing—all in a swashbuckler, cavalry-camp sort of way: he could ride: he could tell stories: he could make up and act: he could also—but this Oliver learned afterwards—play every game of cards and perform all known tricks with these valuable and amusing toys. The knowledge was extremely useful to him though he kept it a secret. This handsome roystering gallant was Oliver's brother—wonderful to relate—his brother! And he had always expected to meet his brother—if ever he should, by misfortune, chance upon him—in rags.

How had they arrived—this pair—at this present greatness? In the world of the Show, Circus, and playing folk, such instances of rapid rise are not unknown. The clog dance on a carpet at a racecourse: the song and hornpipe in a public-house: the daily practice of arts and accomplishments which delight the world and pull in the money: an engagement with a wandering circus: then one with a music hall: the discovery of unknown talent: the development of personal graces: careful teaching, quick learning—put all these together and you may understand how the pair of ragged Romany children managed to push ahead and presently put on splendid raiment, and assumed some of the manners of the swell.

This brother began to come often to the Laboratory. At first he looked about the place with curiosity. Then—finding that no money was to be made by electric apparatus—with contempt. Strange that one of his people should take up with a pursuit by which no money could be got! Why else should a gipsy ever learn anything?

'Sonny,' he said one day, after trying to understand what

the scientific profession really meant—'why don't you chuck it up?'

'Chuck it up? Why—what else could I do?'

'Something useful. Something that would bring in the chips.'

'I shall get a better salary some time, I suppose.'

'A hundred and fifty pounds a year! Three pound a week!' Mr. Stanley made this calculation with infinite contempt. 'To think of a likely chap like you content with a hundred and fifty! To be sure you can't do anything; but I'd teach you. Can't you get something out of the old man?'

'No—he has nothing. He gave me all he had left in order that I might stay on in Germany.'

'Three pound a week! Well, you've seen how we live—and you seem to like it.'

'It is a kind of life,' said Oliver calmly, 'that I had never seen before. Of course I like it. But a man who has got work to do can't sit up all night.'

His brother laughed. 'Suppose that is his work,' he said. 'Well, three pound a week, my son, won't run to it. Most of the young fellows you saw the other night chuck away that much and more every night of their lives. They have their fling—and a good fling too—and it's well worth all the money. But, you see, my chap'—he became here very didactic—'wherever the money is flung around—whether at a Fair, or a Horse Race, or the Stephanotis Club—gentlemen like me are always standing about to pick it up. Ye—es: that's my walk in life. I pick it up. Oh, there's a hundred ways—all on the square—to look at. The best of all ways is a little game, just for two—piquet or écarté for choice—with me on one side of the table and a nice young gentleman with his pockets full on the other, and the champagne ready and within reach on the sideboard. No big jobs and I O U's for me: let me collar the ready cash, whether it's five pounds or fifty, and be ready to give revenge for another evening. Then, my son, nothing nasty can be said. And no partners. Some of my pals work in couples. They go backwards and forwards to America: they catch the Colonial Juggins and they work the railways. Everyone has got his own way, and that is mine. Well, you see, Oliver, since that's your new name, the night's my working time, and, if I went to bed at ten, it would be in bed at the workhouse.'

Some men would feel ashamed should a brother openly avow that he consorted with young fellows having their fling solely in order to win their money. Oliver did not. Perhaps this laxity was due to hereditary lawlessness in his blood: perhaps to that remarkable education which left him free to create his own morality and to select his own religion: perhaps

he knew already that his brother must be making the money which he so freely scattered in some such way as this.

'Well, sonny,' the brother continued. 'In a year or two the young swells are cleaned out. But there's always a new lot coming along. My pals and me—we stay until the place gets too hot for us. You can come among us if you like. But you've got no money to lose; and so, my dear boy, if you come, you must learn how to pick it up.'

Oliver made no reply. His brother, he perceived, would not understand that it was the mirth and the music, the singing, the laughter, the carelessness that attracted him. It seems a poor kind of temptation for a young man of study and science; yet, if you drop your hook into the sea with such a bait, you are pretty sure to catch your young man, whatever be his profession.

'Oliver,' Pharaoh went on, changing the subject, 'that was a queer story you told me the other night about all that money—you know.'

'Yes. It is a queer story,' Oliver replied, with a little effort.

'And the girl who ought to have it all——'

'No—it is her father who ought to have it. The girl's got nothing to do with it.'

'How long is it since you found out?'

'Only a fortnight or so. I found an old letter in a desk and I read it and put things together.'

'Ye—es, and you've been thinking about it ever since.'

'Naturally.'

'As you say. The heir is the dead man's nephew, and you say that he won't claim it.'

'He won't claim it. He only heard the other day that his uncle was dead—heard it accidentally: he never hears anything and he knows nothing. When I told him there was no Will and that it was all his—all his—all that great property his—well: he said he would never claim it. Says there is a curse upon it. A curse! If I had it I would soon show what I thought of the curse.'

'What would you do with all that money if you had it?' asked his brother softly.

'I would build a Laboratory for myself. I would—but you don't understand——'

'No fun? No little suppers?'

Oliver laughed. 'Yes,' he said, 'I would take my share of amusement too. But my work should come first.'

'He won't claim it! Lord! I never knew people could be built that way. And he's got a daughter. Now: if he were to get that money and then become a Percher, it would all go to that girl?'

'I suppose so.'

'Then it's hers by right, isn't it?'

'I suppose so.'

'Yes. I've been thinking over that story more than a bit, and over the way you thought of. There's something in it.'

'What way?'

'Don't be a fool, Oliver, because, though you may have been a bit on, you were not so far gone as to forget.'

'What I said the other night,' Oliver replied quickly, 'was a mere fancy. It meant nothing.'

'A mere fancy, was it, though? Well, my boy, it was a very artful fancy.'

'I said, if such and such a thing were to happen.'

'How the devil is it to happen if someone don't make it happen?'

Oliver was silent.

'Now, look here, sonny. The money ought to be kept in the family, where it belongs, oughtn't it? That's justice. If the Queen rakes it in—that's injustice. Is one man's stubborn folly to keep that money out of the family? Certainly not, if we can prevent it. How can we prevent it? Very easily, says you. Only—one good turn deserves another. If the girl gets the money, she must take you with it. That's fair, isn't it?'

Oliver said nothing.

'I've said this to myself over and over again.'

'You don't understand the thing at all,' Oliver burst out. 'I'm sorry I ever mentioned it to you. Do you think the girl is the sort—the sort that you know—to whom one could even hint at such a bargain?'

'One woman, I take it, is like another. And I never met the woman yet who was above thinking of money. Or the man either,' he added with impartiality.

Oliver said nothing.

'Well then, supposing that little idea of yours could be carried out——'

'I will not touch it. I will have nothing to do with it.'

——'by somebody else. I suppose if you were married to the girl you could prevent her from imitating her fool of a father. Suppose you begin by getting engaged to her——'

'I have thought of it,' Oliver replied gently. 'In fact, I have made a beginning.'

'Without an engagement or a marriage, it would be no use thinking of it.'

'It is no use, I tell you. I can't think of it.'

'Well then, someone else must. Look here, Oliver, this is

too good a thing to be let go. I'm going to make you rich. Can you, to begin with, get engaged to this girl?'

Oliver considered for a few minutes. While he sat considering, his face changed. It became once more, as it had been in the old days when he was a half-starved child, a face as of a skull with a tight skin over it, crowned with a thick black mat of hair.

'Yes, he said sullenly, 'she shall be engaged to me, whether she likes it or not.'

'When she is, let me know.' Mr. Stanley rose as if to go. 'Time enough then.'

'What do you mean to do?' Oliver asked with alarm.

'My boy, you shan't be put to the least trouble, or danger, or difficulty in this matter. I know a poor devil—a lawyer he was once, but he came to grief over the money—couldn't count it, I suppose—who'll do the whole job. He's paralysed now: lives by writing whatever he's told to write. You want a certain document. Give him the names and the signatures, the dates and all about it, and that document, whatever it is, will be ready to time.'

'He knows your name, I suppose?'

'If you suppose that, you suppose I am a fool. No, my son; he does not know my name. And if he did, nobody knows that I'm your brother. And as for you, he's never seen you, nor heard of you, and you won't come into the business at all till the end.'

'And when we've got the document, what then?'

'We'll think of that afterwards. Can you get the signatures?'

Oliver opened a drawer and drew out a paper.

'Here is an old deed. I picked it up in Joe Mayes's office the other day. It contains the signature of Samuel Norbery. The other signatures are his witnesses—Joseph Mayes and an old clerk who is dead.'

'Oh! Who is Joseph Mayes?'

'He was Mr. Norbery's clerk, and now calls himself his successor. He's got some of the papers of the old business.'

'Oh! He's got the papers. I suppose he might have been one of the witnesses if a will had been made.'

'Very likely. Most likely.'

'Do you know him?'

'Yes—very well. I have always known him.'

'Humph! If such a will were found among the papers, what would he be likely to do, now?'

'He would certainly try to make terms with the parties concerned before he showed the document.'

'Good man! Well now—supposing—listen to me—sup-

posing his name—the name of Joseph Mayes—should happen to be on the paper as one of the witnesses, and suppose he was himself to find the thing among the papers—eh?—without expecting or suspecting—eh?—what then?'

'I don't understand.'

'Think a bit. First, he finds—suppose—a will. This startles him more than a bit. Then he finds his own name as a witness. This is another startler. He knows, very well, that he never signed that name. Therefore, not being quite a fool, he perceives that the thing is a plant. Very good. He puts it aside—mind, he don't destroy it—and he thinks it over. The more he thinks it over, the more he begins to remember when and where he signed that will. And mind—he's got to produce it—nobody else—and, if necessary, he's got to swear to it. Nobody else has got anything to do with it. If there's a row they go for him, not for you and me. Do you catch on? It's this way. If he produces the will—he will get from somebody concerned, after the money is secured—a big lump. If he don't he will get nothing. He knows he didn't write the will—he may suspect what he pleases. Let him suspect. And it's all to his advantage that there shall never be any proof. Now, young man, do you begin to tumble?'

Oliver sat down and gasped. The audacity of the proposal filled him with amazement. If the thing could be really done, without any assistance at all from himself! and if the thing, should it fail, be made to appear the work of another man!

'I will take this paper,' said Pharaoh, putting it into his pocket. 'Now give me the full names. Oh! they are in the deed. But—I say—what about the second witness?'

'Take the man in that paper. It was old Backler's clerk—and he's dead.'

'Well—and the date?'

'Make it seven or eight years ago—any day.'

'Good. But suppose we were to fix a day when he could be proved to have been out of town?'

'Old Norbery never went out of town.'

'Better and better.'

'I have learned,' said Oliver, trying not to look guilty, 'that a will is nearly always kept by the solicitor who draws it. Generally he keeps the letter of instruction if there is any, and the first draft as well. Let us have all those. Here is a letter of Mr. Norbery's, to show the handwriting—and here is a paper drawn in the handwriting of Mr. Backler his lawyer. You see, it is written on large thin blue paper.'

'Oliver,' said his brother with eyes of admiration, 'you've got a head. You will be a credit to your family yet, though you were bought for a fi-pun note.'

He took these papers too, and placed them in his pocket.

'There's one thing more,' said Oliver. 'The old man had robbed his brother-in-law and therefore he hated his nephew. Better let that be expressed in the will.

'How about a condition—the money to go to the girl when she marries Oliver Luttrel—eh?'

'No—no—not that. Say—when she changes her name—on the day of her marriage—when she ceases to be Althea Indagine.'

'Yes. I see. That is better.' Mr. Stanley made a note to this effect. 'That shows a good strong healthy family animosity. When she ceases to be an Indagine. We'll add a little clause about you, I think. Sammy,' he added with great feeling: 'I really feel proud of you. You call this just a mere fancy, do you?—with everything cut and dried ready to hand. Just a mere fancy, was it? Well, you shall give that dear girl her money: you shall pay the man—what's his name?—Mayes—a thousand pounds—five thousand pounds. How much is it? Half a million? We'll make the milestones fly. Not a word more till you are engaged. Come to Julia's to-morrow evening. There will be one or two people and a little Nap, or something lively, afterwards. I'll lend you some money. Until this comes off—I'll keep you rolling in money. But, sonny, for Lord's sake don't play with the sportsmen of the Stephanotis Club.'

CHAPTER X.

THE 'SATURDAY REVIEW.'

THEY were talking of the Poet.

'Above everything,' said his daughter, 'I wish that he could go back to the world of letters and rejoin his old companions.

'After all these years most of them must be dead and gone,' Laurence replied. 'I have been into Fleet Street and searched the old haunts. No poets I am told meet now at the Rainbow, except accidentally.'

'You have given him new life, Mr. Waller. If only you could take him back again to the old ways. I dream of his taking up again, even after all these years, the active life which he gave up thirty years ago.'

Laurence reflected.

'As for the world of letters,' he said, 'I know nobody in it. Your father is the only poet I have ever seen. But I might make him willing to find his own way back. May I try—if only for the sake of pleasing you?'

His voice dropped a little: a girl with the least grain of coquetry would have observed a softening of his eyes. But Althea thought not of those things. She was thinking of her father. Better would it have been had she shown some little—any little—sense of what might be in the young man's heart. Better had he forced her, then and there, to understand. But he was in the Paradise where in a purple mist everything that one desires seems about to happen of its own accord. In such a Paradise one never desires to hurry things. Why shake the tree when the fruit is about to fall? Happy land! Happy those who live in it, though they presently, it must be confessed, get fat and lazy.

He set himself to the task, however—and he succeeded. It was by an artful deception that the moralist cannot but deplore. You shall hear what it was. Now an artful deception of the more elaborate kind takes a little time to arrange. Duplicity is troublesome. Treachery requires stage management.

When his scheme was perfected he repaired to the house in New Thames Street, a paper carelessly rolled up in his hand—it was in the morning—and he boldly knocked at the door of the poet's study. Nothing less than the poet's study, if you please. He knew not, altogether, his own temerity. Yet no one, not even Althea, had ever before ventured to disturb the sacred seclusion of this spot in the morning. Why, it is in the morning that the darling of the Muses gets his finest ideas. The children of Vicesimus did not more religiously respect the sanctity of the Academy. Yet this young man boldly, fearlessly, knocked at the door with less hesitation than if it had been a lawyer's office.

The room into which he entered was lined with books all round the walls from floor to ceiling: there was not a single new book on the shelves, not one whose freshness of binding proclaimed it to be less than thirty years old. The Poet was discovered standing at his shelves taking down one book after another in the idle manner of one who loves books so well as to love handling them. He was, in fact, 'looking up a point.' Many idle men are perpetually employed in looking up a point. With his fine, delicate features, his long white hair, his tall figure, he looked every inch a poet. He was clad in a dressing-gown made of some shawl-like stuff frayed at the wrists and ragged at the skirts. Thirty or forty years ago all poets, authors, actors, musicians, dramatists and painters, Bohemians and bachelors, wore such a dressing-gown in the morning—as well be out of life as out of fashion. The dressing-gown was in fact as much a part of the literary profession in those days as the stout-and-oyster supper after the play and the half a dozen goes of brandy or whisky punch after the oysters. The garment

was tied about his waist by a thick crimson rope with tassels, once very splendid though now faded; and what with the books, the dressing-gown, the crimson rope, the white beard, and the flowing locks, the Poet looked and felt extremely professional and business-like.

He looked up and smiled a welcome—actually he welcomed a visitor who dared to disturb his mornings. He who had received no visitors for so many years!

'You, my young friend? Come in—come in. You wished perhaps to see my den—the poet's workshop. Ha! ha! A poor place—a poor place—but look around you!' He himself looked round with a little anxiety as to the properties. It is not on the stage alone that we are anxious about the properties. He was reassured. The table was strewn with papers, and these—as they should be—were covered with verses; an open drawer showed a pile of MSS.; a pen lay upon the papers; three or four note-books lay open; the chair looked as if it had been just pushed back; by the empty fireplace was a long, low leather chair, on the seat of which lay an open book; on a smaller table at the window was a row of books, some open, some waiting, all tossed in an admirable confusion; on the mantelshelf hung pencil sketches, framed, of literary men, famous the generation agone, the memory of whom is now somewhat faded. Mr. Indagine felt on the whole satisfied with the look of his study: it had a certain learned disorder as of the Scholar and the Poet; it showed a wealth of books; it looked like work. One thing alone was wanting. There were no proofs. This defect went to his heart like a knife. It seemed to spoil all. There should have been a pile of proofs—printer's proofs. But—he took courage again—would this omission be perceived by the young gentleman from far Australia?

'You may retire from society, Mr. Indagine,' said his admirer, 'but you cannot, I observe, retire from work.'

'One must work or die. Not to work would be high treason to the Muse. The gift of expression is conferred, I take it, Sir, on the express condition of work.'

'You must have done a great deal since you came here.'

The Poet sat down in his arm-chair, crossing his legs and resting his fingers one upon the other. It is an admirable attitude for one who speaks words of weight.

'I have worked—sometimes successfully—sometimes, as is the case with all who work on Art of any kind, with less success. The results of thirty years are in this room.'

'Then we may expect another volume—many other volumes?'

'Young gentleman, I said work: I did not say, publication.'

'Surely—with submission—one includes the other.'

'My dear young friend,' Mr. Indagine rose solemnly, 'I will confide to you that I have had, not ambitions—at my age ambitions are dead—but a Design, a Purpose. I have proposed to myself a posthumous pleasure: I have resolved upon leaving behind me, at my death, my works ready for publication.'

'Oh! at your death! Nay, Mr. Indagine——'

'Would you have me give them—my enemies—another opportunity for showing their malice and malignity? No, Sir, no.'

'But—thirty years—your enemies are dead by this time. Or they are now powerless. What were you saying the other night? We were talking of popularity and we argued back from Australia to the Mother Country. Think: you took the line that if a man was popular in the colonies he must first have been popular at home, you remember? The inference, Mr. Indagine, though you made no personal application, was obvious, permit me to say, to every one present.'

The Poet sat down again and murmured softly, as these grateful words of flattery dropped upon his ear. The young man looked so earnest, so deferent, and with eyes of such admiration, that he could not choose but to murmur and purr.

'Only one inference is possible,' Laurence repeated.

The Poet laid his head upon his hand. 'You wish me——' he began.

'I wish you to come out of this retreat, where you have shut yourself up too long and to return to the world with the harvest—the sheaves, the golden grain—of your long seclusion.'

'To return? No, no—it is too late.'

'As for your old friends,' Laurence continued, 'they are gone. Most of them are dead, and the world has, I assure you, long since forgotten the savage attack made upon your name and fame.'

'How? If my verses have become popular, how can the world have forgotten the history of the poet?'

'There are some poets, perhaps, into whose private life the world seldom inquires. It learns that they lead a retired life. No one, for example, has ever written a life of Tennyson—or of Longfellow.'

'It would be, I confess, a triumph to appear in the world once more.'

'Surely. Though the old circles of which you have told me are long since broken up. By the way,' Laurence blushed and hesitated, 'there is a curious illustration of that inference—I said it was an obvious inference—which I have just seen in a paper. He unfolded and straightened the paper in his hand. 'It is the *Saturday Review*.' He laid it on the table and turned over the pages. 'You know the *Saturday Review*?'

'I remember it. Yes, yes—it was started by some men in our set. There was a clever man named—I forget his name—who became Editor. The *Saturday Review*—does it exist still? It began cleverly.'

'Why, here it is! I should rather think it did exist! There is an article about you in it.'

'An article? An article about me?' The Poet started to his feet. 'About me?'

'There may have been a thousand about you while you have been hiding away. However, here is one.'

'Give it to me—give it to me.'

The article was one of those in small type which are found in the middle of the Journal. It was on the single sheet of four pages which is sometimes found in the very middle of the paper.

'It is called,' said Laurence, as Mr. Indagine eagerly turned over the pages, 'The Poet of a Single Volume.'

Mr. Indagine read it aloud. As he read, his voice faltered, his cheek flushed, and his eyes glowed.

The writer of the article began by asking who was Clement Indagine, and what had become of him. He likened him unto a certain Waring commemorated by another poet. He asked why, after one effort, one single volume of verse, which contained promise if not actual finished work, of a higher order than had ever been given to the world since the appearance of Keats's Poems, the writer had suddenly disappeared. This opening sentence it was which made the voice of the reader to shake.

The article occupied a column and a half in length, and proceeded to quote from the poems and to comment upon them, but as in the capacity of humble admirer rather than hard and cold critic. The readers of the *Saturday Review* must have marvelled greatly at the attitude of this writer, because, to one who read the extracted gems, they did not seem so very wonderful after all. They might even be called commonplace. Now, it is not the wont of this Journal to bestow unstinted praise upon mediocre poets and commonplace writers. Perhaps, however, there were finer passages lying unquoted in the volume. The praise might have seemed to the habitual reader overdone, even on the supposition of the hidden gems, and one who read the paper regularly would perhaps have observed a *je-ne-sais-quoi* in the style not altogether in harmony with the rest of the paper. But Mr. Indagine had not seen the *Saturday Review* for thirty years, and the article was praise of his own work. Therefore he saw nothing strange, forced, or dissonant.

In conclusion the writer said:—

'We have quoted enough from the remarkable volume before us to prove that this unknown author was as a Poet a whole

head and shoulders above any of his time, except Tennyson and Browning. In the sweetness and flow of his metres he anticipates Swinburne: in quiet pathos he surpasses Longfellow: in simple unstudied grace he is equal to Austin Dobson: in the dexterity and ease of his verse he resembles Edmund Gosse. The widespread favour with which he is now regarded: the natural manner in which his lines spring to the memory of writer and speaker, and are daily quoted, and have become household words: show that the world at large is, like ourselves, anxious to know what, who, and whence is this Clement Indagine. If it was an adopted name, what was his real name? If he be one of those to whom the Gods have shown their love in the manner customary to the Olympians, where did he live and when did he die? If he is still living, why has he written no more? Why was he received at first with indifference, or contempt, or worse? By what strange fate has this writer been passed over and neglected by his own generation only to spring into new and vigorous life in that which follows? This is a unique literary phenomenon: and it should be taken to heart by the most unsuccessful. Nay: we believe that the story of Clement Indagine and his posthumous fame—if indeed it be posthumous—will hereafter become as much a commonplace of consolation for the failures in Poetry as the history of the rejection of *Vanity Fair* has been to the novelist who hawks his bolster of MSS. from publisher to publisher. But let someone—someone—tell us—who—who was Clement Indagine?'

The Poet read the last lines in an agitated voice. The tears stood in his eyes: his lips trembled: his cheek was flushed. Then he folded the paper and tried to appear calm and critical.

'This,' he said, 'is—ahem!—unexpected—I confess, and gratifying—most gratifying. I admit, young gentleman, that it is most gratifying. After so many years to find oneself the subject of such criticism—so appreciative and so generous—is indeed a phenomenon in the History of Letters. It is very gratifying. The language of the writer, I think, is calm, critical—even cold in parts.' Oh, Poet! 'But it is sympathetic throughout. Perhaps a more typical selection of pieces might have been made for quotation, but the writer speaks from a full heart; his mind is fully charged with the verses—he is saturated with his author. That is as it should be. Young gentleman, you are singularly fortunate. You are a stranger from far Australia—from the Antipodes—yet you—and none but you—bring me the news that I am read and loved out there—out there—and therefore, by inference—yes, yes, by inference—at home. And then you—none but you—bring me convincing proof—clear and tangible proof—that I am a name and a power among my own people.'

His voice broke. He sat down and was silent for a space. His eyes were humid.

Laurence, who had smiled while he spoke of the coldness of the writer, now watched him with anxious look. Had he gone too far?

'My ambition,' said the Poet, 'has been achieved. After long years it has been achieved. Now let me depart in peace, since life has no more to give me. I say, young gentleman,' he rose with unsteady legs, 'let me—let me——'

Laurence caught him in his arms as he fell forward, fainting. The crown of laurel—late plucked, late wreathed—was too much for him.

Ten minutes later he had recovered and was sitting up, the *Saturday Review* still in his hands.

'But for you, Mr. Waller,' he said, 'but for you I should never have seen this. I cannot, indeed, thank you too much. No, I cannot, I cannot. The sight of this article has brought me such a moment of happiness as I never expected to feel. Will you leave me now? I must think—I must think. No, without you I should never have heard of my own fame. Althea sees no papers. My brother-in-law reads nothing—Oliver tells us nothing. The Cottle girls, poor children! hardly know the meaning of literature. Leave me now.'

'One moment, Mr. Indagine.' Laurence took the paper out of the poet's hands, and opening a penknife, he cut out the article. 'You don't want the whole paper, do you? I will take that away. Remember, Sir, we must have more work from you.'

'Ha! ha!' the Master laughed: the Master threw back his head and laughed: 'more work! Yes. You shall have it. More work! It lies ready for you in the drawer.'

'And you must return to society. Promise me that you will come out of your seclusion and return to the world.'

'Yes, yes—return. That is, I will—I will think of it.' He did not laugh at the thought of returning to the world. Laurence remembered the words of his daughter: 'The world has become dreadful to him.'

'You will come back to a sympathetic world. Your old world of wits is broken up. You will appear in a different world altogether. I am truly fortunate in having been the means of bringing these things to your knowledge.'

'Young gentleman,' the Poet seized his hand, 'I am grateful to you. If you knew—if you could ever guess the half—of what I have suffered from the neglect—the unmerited neglect—of the world—you would realise something of what I feel. Yes—yes—there must be a change. But go—go now—and let me see you later on. I must be alone—to think—to feel—to understand what has befallen me.'

All this happened in the morning.

In the evening Laurence, who had been dining in the West, returned about ten.

He looked in, as was his wont. There were signs of excitement and agitation.

'Oh! Mr. Waller,' cried Cassie, 'only to think! Mr. Indagine is a great man at last! We are so proud. Althea has brought us the article—such a beautiful article! We read it all through. We sent Sempronius to buy a copy of the paper—here it is—but we can't find the article in it.'

'No? Then it must have been in another number. Of course. Perhaps in next week's. Never mind. It is a grand thing for Mr. Indagine, is it not?—to find that he has become so famous.'

'Felix says that none of the fellows at the Poly ever heard of Mr. Indagine's poetry,' said Sempronius from his retreat.

'At the Poly!' Cassie repeated scornfully. 'What do they think of at the Poly but gymnastics and lectures and things? You don't go to the Poly for poetry. I have never seen Althea look so happy, Mr. Waller. You have made her as happy as her father.

'The Bank is honoured,' said Mr. Cottle, 'by this public recognition. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Massinger, Fletcher, Vicesimus Cottle, Clement Indagine! A goodly succession indeed! My father would have been gratified by this public recognition.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOCTOR'S HAPPINESS.

I do not suppose that anybody ever woke up on a fine summer morning with a greater sense of satisfaction, a warmer approval of conscience, or a more balmy confidence that things were going to happen exactly as they were wanted than Laurence after this cold-blooded deception of the aged bard. He would have danced and performed capers and pirouettes had he known how: he would have sung songs of joy and gladness had he known any, but no such songs are manufactured in these days: he would willingly have dressed himself in purple silk and gone upon Bank Side with a crown of roses on his head and a gold cup, or a lute, or some such trifle in his hand in order to show his gladness after the manner of the ancients. But young men now do never display these outward signs of joy. Alas! His joy was to be turned into sorrow and his laughter into mourning.

The reason of the joy was nothing more than his success by

means of craft and subtlety. Reason and argument would have failed with the divine poet. Flattery succeeded. This, indeed, is the only form of deception which never fails. When the fox in the fable—the only fable which is always true at all ages and at all times—got that cheese from the crow and was taking it home with a smile of satisfaction, he was met by a monkey who assured him, with many bows and smiles, that of all the creatures of the field, none was so truly virtuous, so disinterested, as the Herr Reineke. He was wool all through, said the monkey. He was the only perfectly white creature. He was straight. Benevolence and integrity shone in his eyes. He then entreated the fox, whom he addressed indifferently as Your Grace, or Your Lordship, or Right Reverend Sir, to give him, the worst of sinners, some short discourse upon religion. He himself would hold the cheese during the sermon. A moment later, he administered the moral from a lofty branch.

Apprenez que tout flatteur
Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute.

The rest of the story and how the monkey fell a victim to the wolf and the wolf to the pig, who ate up the cheese while the weasel was making up a story, may be read in Phædrus.

Flattery had succeeded. Althea, ignorant of the means, was pleased. Why, the poet swallowed it all, even the grossest bits, with greediness, and when it was finished, only longed for more. Now, he would come out of his retirement—for which he was already prepared by the delusion of wide-spread fame—and go back to the world, whatever that might mean. If he would only do that, only take Althea away with him, what mattered any amount of delusion? Let him even tempt once more the malignity of his enemies. During his thirty years of sulks—what a splendid spell of that enjoyable mood!—he must have made many thousand lovely lines. But Althea would also go into the world when her father returned to it.

Althea was pleased. Some day he might have to confess to her the deception he had practised. If—when—no—if—a certain termination of his visit should really happen, he would have to make a clean breast. But not to the poet. He who had deceived himself at the outset might harmlessly continue in an illusion so pleasing and so healthful to the soul. Never was man made more happy by a device so simple. This young man felt no real remorse for his deception, but he was certainly uneasy as to the way in which Althea might take it.

How Althea would take it. He stood at his window and looked across the river. Bank Side was very noisy and busy: hundreds of men ran up and down the planks with baskets on their backs: there must have been an immense order from

someone for broken glass: scrap iron was certainly in great demand somewhere. But this young man saw and heard nothing. Like Althea, he was fallen into a dream: he saw, somewhere in a bower of bliss, a young man and a maiden: the young man wooed the maiden and she gave him her lips to kiss.

Presently he awoke from this blissful vision and finished his dressing. Then he went down stairs. No one was in the house except Sempronius, whose holidays had just begun. Some boys go to Broadstairs or Brighton or Walton-on-the-Naze for their holidays: Sempronius went into his corner beside the window. But he enjoyed his holidays quite as much as any other boy, because he read all day long—not books from his grandfather's library—but borrowed books—Scott—Fielding—Defoe—Smollett—Dickens—everybody. Cassie had gone to her photographer's studio; Flavia to St. Martin's; Lucius to his perch on the Higher Branch; Cornelia to her seat in the porch beside the Body. Breakfast was laid for him—and Sempronius was in his place, nose in book.

'Well, boy,' said Laurence. 'How are your sisters this morning?'

'Cassie cried all night,' said the boy, without taking his eyes off his book. 'I heard her through the partition.'

'Why did Cassie cry?'

'Oh!' The boy shook his head impatiently—what were Cassie's woes to a boy in the middle of 'King Solomon's Mines'? 'She cried because she's quarrelled with Oliver.'

'You think that?'

'I know it's that. Flavia knows it too.'

'You have reason for believing?'

'Oh bother,' said the boy. 'I've seen him kissing her a dozen times.'

'This fact, my young friend,' said Laurence, pouring out his tea, 'taken singly, might seem to favour your hypothesis. The danger, however, of a general conclusion from one or two isolated facts'—but the boy shook his shoulders and put his fingers to his ears.

The rude awakening took place after breakfast when Laurence retired to the Bank for his morning tobacco. There are always a few of the unemployed lounging about here in the morning exchanging ideas. The young swell who had nothing to do was popular among them because he readily conversed with them, made everybody free of his pouch and proved himself a ready lender of those small sums which it would be an excess of duty to remember or return.

The Doctor it was who rudely awakened him. He came marching briskly along Bank Side on his morning round, and seeing Laurence, stopped to greet him cheerily. The Doctor

was always a cheerful man: all doctors in general practice are cheerful: in fact, cheerfulness is the first subject in which a medical student has to satisfy his examiners. Only a specialist is allowed to be sometimes grumpy.

'Why,' he said, 'you are the very man I was thinking of at the moment.'

'I am glad to have been in your thoughts.'

'This very morning after breakfast I went to my brother-in-law's study—a thing I haven't done for years. "Clement," I said, "I should like to carry the good news to that new friend of ours who has brought us so much happiness."'

'Good news?' Laurence was thinking of the article and its effect. 'I took in the paper myself, yesterday morning.'

'You did. Nothing ever made him so happy. But it is even better news than that. In the evening—in the evening'—the Doctor's voice broke a little. He sat down on the bench and cleared his throat. 'Twenty years ago'—he started his information with a new paragraph, as people will when they are much moved—'I began a most interesting experiment. You know something of it, already. I wanted, first of all, to isolate a boy from the more mischievous influences of the age. I wanted him to grow up free from prejudices, so as to look at truth with clear and steady eyes. I proposed that he should learn, for himself, what we vainly try to teach—how to elevate his soul. I thought that a boy taught to search for truth in all her forms would the soonest arrive at the one doctrine which can ever advance the world—I mean the sacrifice of self.'

Laurence thought of the doctrine at which the seeker after Truth had really arrived—the exaltation and worship of self; could the Doctor then be quite ignorant of his pupil's views?

'Well—my son—I have always called him my son—grew up and has become what you know and have seen. Am I right to be proud of such a son?'

'As a man of science,' said Laurence, gravely.

'To keep him long enough in Germany to finish his studies ran away with all the little money I had left—not that I grudge it. Never was money better spent. But it is the fact. My brother-in-law, as you may suppose, is not rich. In fact his only property consists of three or four houses bequeathed him by a cousin, and we are not able to do more than live with strict economy. Do I weary you with these details?'

'No, no, not in the least, I assure you,' said Laurence, wondering what this might mean. 'Pray go on.'

'You have taken so kindly an interest in Clement: we all like you so much. Well, I will go on. We are getting old, he and I—and there is Althea. There is Althea.'

If the Doctor had not been gazing into the middle of a half

laden barge he might have seen the young man's cheeks flush suddenly—and it might have caused even the least suspicious man in the world to have suspicions.

'There is Althea,' Laurence repeated, with an effort.

'We think of her and of her future and we tremble. For, when we are gone what will become of her? We have lived altogether apart from the world—foolishly, I now think—but at first I had my work and Clement had what he thought sufficient reasons: therefore, the girl has no friends: and she will have very little money. What is to become of her? She is ignorant of the world and innocent. She might fall a prey to any designing person. Good Heavens! What will become of her? The question has been before us lately a great deal, and I confess that it makes me very uneasy. After sixty anything may happen to a man. What is to become of Althea when we are gone?'

'Doctor,' cried Laurence, eagerly, 'let me——'

'One moment, my dear young friend—one moment. Last night, after Althea had gone to bed, Oliver, who was with us, opened his mind.'

'Oliver? Oliver?' If his cheek had been crimson before, it now became white. 'Oliver opened his mind?'

'Oliver told us that he has long loved Althea—and asked our permission to address her. That is my news. That is why I am so rejoiced. Oliver and Althea—my adopted son and my sister's daughter. They have been brought up together. They know each other entirely. We can trust her happiness to Oliver with such confidence as we should feel in no one else. Her happiness must be considered first. As for other things, there is a great future before him: she will be proud of her husband. That is a great point.'

'But there is—— Has Althea—has Miss Indagine—consented?'

'Oliver will speak to her this evening. We agreed that nothing should be said to her by ourselves, and we would not endeavour to influence her. She will not know our own hopes: Oliver has promised not to put this view of the matter before her. It is left entirely to her heart.'

'To her heart,' Laurence repeated, his own a little lifted by the assurance.

'As for Oliver, he will have a wife who is one of a million. That he knows very well. I have for some time hoped that the influence of love would be brought to bear upon his character. There is a point in the history of every man when love is needed for the full development of his character. He may pass through it without getting love, and without permanent loss, but for most men it is needed. I think that Oliver has reached this point.

Love will reveal to him many aspects of humanity of which he is as yet ignorant.'

'Yes,' said Laurence shortly. 'Has Oliver spoken to you about the—the progress he has made towards your doctrines?'

'No: he is feeling his way. He is working, searching, and meditating. He leads the simple life which befits the true scientific spirit. I am content, so far.'

'The business will be settled, you say, this evening.'

'Yes. Come in at half-past nine. Come in and rejoice with us. You have brought so much light and happiness to the house that we should like you to be present at our new rejoicing. I haven't bored you with all this gossip, have I? You look worried. I ought to have noticed that before.'

'No—no. You have interested me'—he tried to smile—'much more than you can guess. I am most interested. I will be with you this evening.'

The Doctor nodded and laughed and strode away to see his patients.

This was the rude awakening. This was how things were going to happen just as he desired. This was the end of the little story which he had resolved to watch. Now, indeed, he might pack up his things and go home.

But the story was not yet finished.

CHAPTER XII.

ALTHEA'S ENGAGEMENT.

One who goes a-wooing should dance as he walks, and should laugh when he speaks: he should have the light of love in his eyes, and the flush of yearning on his cheek. He should also show the certainty of conquest in his carriage, which should be valiant and confident, yet not arrogant. To come creeping, with downcast eyes, a cloudy brow, and an anxious pale face, is a poor way to open up a subject so delightful and so full of interest. Yet it was the way adopted by Oliver. He had asked Althea to meet him in her father's study at nine that evening. She certainly knew what he proposed to say: that false start made on Bank Side warned her. Some girls go to such an interview with beating hearts and burning cheeks: Althea went quietly and gravely, with no outward sign of emotion whatever.

Outside, in the opposite room, the two old men sat at their chess table, pretending to play; but one exposed his Queen and the other forgot to take advantage of it. One left a mate easy to

me, do you, Oliver? Yet there is no softness in your eyes or in your voice. No—my dear Oliver—we have been brother and sister together a good many years: we will continue brother and sister, if you please.'

'This comes from living alone. Softened heart! Rubbish! Love, in truth, is the most simple thing in the world. Two persons are attracted towards each other, by the laws of Nature. If the girl is beautiful, as you are, she attracts the man readily. They call this the Power of Beauty. Very good. I am attracted to you by the laws of Nature—which I do not pretend to resist. If you are pleased with me, you will accept me. But we need not talk any nonsense about softening of hearts. Accept me, Althea. You have known me all your life. You have not to find out what kind of man I am: you must know beforehand that I shall do my best to make you happy.'

'Indeed, Oliver, I do not know that, at all.'

'You can't expect to have an angel made on purpose for you. Better to know beforehand the worst that can be said about a man than find out afterwards.'

'What do you think, now—to be practical—will make me happy?'

Oliver sat down and laughed. He had made the first plunge and was more sure of himself. He was more at ease sitting, because Althea continued to stand, and she was taller than himself and dominated him.

'If you talk sentimental rubbish,' he replied, 'you would be happy with love and the union of two hearts and the mingling of souls and the extravagant worship of a lover. We are not in the Elizabethan age, however. If you talk good honest sense, you want, to make you completely happy, first'—he looked up with a complete return to cheerfulness—'material comfort. Every woman likes to be warm and well clothed and to have a reasonable certainty about the daily bread and jam. You shall have that, assured. Next, you want a complete change in your life. You are at last—I think the coming of this Australian chap has done it—sick and tired of this hole of a place. You want society, art, travel, and the freshness of new thoughts. Well—I will give you that complete change. Confess, now, this is what you want to make you happy.'

'Well, Oliver,' she said, 'you are partly right. Three weeks ago I should have told you that I desired no change. Now, all is altered. It is true. I do most vehemently desire to go away with my father, somewhere—I know not where—anywhere, so that we may see the world and live among cultivated people. This place seems to be choking me—and now, at length, my father is roused from his apathy. Before many days, I am sure, he will be as eager as I can wish to get back

to the world. You say I want change. Why, I am myself changed—I know not how. Even my old power of dreaming has left me: you used to laugh at my visions: they do not come to me any longer: my mind is full of new thoughts—I am grown impatient. Yes,' she murmured, 'I want change.'

'Why . . . there . . . there . . .' said Oliver eagerly, 'half the battle is won. You want change—I will give it to you.'

'I think not, Oliver. You have known me all my life, as you say, but you have never given me anything: not a thought or a hope—and you never will.'

'Yes—yes—I will give you all—all that you desire.'

'No. You are quite mistaken, Oliver,' she repeated, 'quite mistaken; you do not love me at all. Two people brought up together, as we have been, cannot fall in love: I am no mystery to you: nor you to me. We know each other too well, my poor boy.'

'If you mean that I am to expect you to be different from what you are, of course I am not in love. But, Althea, I know you so well that I have no need to imagine graces and virtues. I have seen them and proved them in you.'

'Really, Oliver? Then you have concealed your admiration very carefully.'

'Would you have had me speak before the time?'

'What time?'

'There is a time for everything. Now, Althea, give me five minutes only—I have my foot on the ladder: I have obtained the lowest post on that ladder of fortune and fame. I have no income yet, to speak of. But that will come. A brief occupation of my present post will lead to something better. I am a Fellow of the Royal Society—the youngest Fellow. The future is clear before me. So much for myself. Now for you. My father, as I am permitted to call him, has spent upon my education the whole of the fortune which was left to him. He has now nothing but the income which he makes by incessant toil among these people for whom he has thrown away his life. Your father has his slender income, it is true, and it will be yours . . .'

'You mean,' she interrupted, 'that it would be a good thing for me if I were to marry you. It is a kind of bargain that you propose.'

'Hear me out. I should get a wife, for my part—the woman I love—beautiful and attractive—who would advance me socially. A man like myself, without any backing up of relations, wants such a wife. Why, of course, the chief advantage would be on my side. I willingly own it. No man, Althea, can offer in return for yourself anything in the least its equivalent'—he marred this rather pretty speech by a coldness which

took the life and meaning out of it. 'Yet on the whole you would not lose by the . . . the arrangement. Without nonsense about softening of hearts, think of it in this way, Althea.'

She shook her head. 'We waste the time,' she said; 'it is perfectly impossible that I could ever love you.'

'You think so because your head is full of poetic rubbish. Wait a little. When we are engaged your thoughts will begin to dwell about me, and I dare say you will discover all kinds of gifts and graces in your lover that you would pass over in your brother. For instance, you would like your husband to be a distinguished man. Very well, I think I may promise you that he shall be distinguished. I will make science a ladder by which to climb to any heights you like.'

'I would certainly like my husband to be distinguished,' Althea replied; 'and yet . . . No, Oliver. Let there be no more said. I do not love you and you do not love me. What is the use of going on? That is the last word.'

Oliver made no reply. For a few minutes there was silence. Then he played his last card, speaking slowly and distinctly. It was the card he had promised not to play.

'There is one word more. It may influence you. In the next room are two old men who love you, Althea—as much as I do. At this moment they are most anxiously waiting to hear the result of this talk.'

'Where? Do they know?' She changed colour. 'You have told them?'

'I could not attempt to win you, Althea,' he replied with dignity, 'until I had first asked their consent.'

He said this without the appearance of bragging over this virtuous conduct. 'They not only know what I am saying to you, but they have given their consent, and that most readily and heartily. Althea'—he was now speaking with greater animation and the appearance of sincerity—'I declare to you—I am sure you will believe this—there is nothing in the world which would please and rejoice them more. They are growing old: they cannot bear to think that the time may come—and that soon—when they must leave you alone—friendless—and slenderly provided for. In me they see a protector, rather than a lover. Think of these old people, Althea.'

The tears came into her eyes. 'Yes,' she replied, 'I am always thinking of them.'

'That you should be left alone—in such a place—with no other resources than the precarious rent of a few houses in this poor quarter—no wonder they tremble. At this very moment, Althea, I repeat, they are waiting anxiously to know your answer.'

'Oh! what answer can I give? What should I give?

Oliver, you must understand. It is impossible—it is impossible —I could never marry you—because, we could never love each other.'

'You may change—I am sure you will change—when we are engaged.'

'No—no—it is impossible. I will tell them so.'

'And if you did not change we could break the engagement. Can you believe that I would hold you to an engagement if you could not love me?'

'Well, but, Oliver, girls don't get engaged only in order to break it off.'

'No. On the other hand, very few girls have seen their future husband half a dozen times before they become engaged to him. The love comes after—if it comes at all.'

'No . . . no . . . it is impossible.'

'Think of my father, Althea. Make him happy in thinking that we are engaged. He believes in me, you know. He thinks I am going to be the greatest man of science that ever lived—and he thinks that I shall make you happy. For his sake—for your own father's sake, Althea—let us pretend to be engaged until the love that follows will bind us surely.'

'Pretend to be engaged?'

'Why not? There are only our two selves—and these two old men—we have no friends. Such a thing might hurt another girl, but it can do no harm to you. No one at all, outside, shall know it. If you find, afterwards, that it cannot come to anything, we can break it off. But to make them happy, let us pretend.'

'Is it possible?' the girl asked. 'You have actually gone through all this pretence of love only to make your father happy?'

'If you like to think so——'

'It is good of you, Oliver. It was a kind thought. I have never known you do a kinder thing. But no—it is impossible even to pretend.'

'Only at first, to make them happy.'

'To make them happy I would do anything. But this is nonsense.'

'I will release you whenever you please—nay—I will not consider you as bound to me by any other than a conditional promise. We will tell them that it is conditional. You shall be engaged, Althea, with the understanding that you can step out of it at any moment.'

In the other room, the chess-board was now pushed aside. The Doctor and the Poet, joined now by Laurence, waited in silence for the decision. A hundred times during the day had

the young man been tempted to go to the Doctor and say, 'This adopted son of yours, whom you believe to be working his way to the doctrine of self-sacrifice, is a cold-blooded worshipper of self, the centre of the universe; he is utterly incapable of sacrifice; he has deceived and thrown over the girl whom he once pretended to love; he has no illusions; he is as incapable of honest love as of self-sacrifice. He is not worthy to be even under the same roof as Althea. Yet you rejoice at the possibility of his marrying her. Should they marry, certain misery awaits her.' Thus and thus did he frame a speech which he might make to the Doctor or to Althea's father. Yet he could not say it. He had no right to interfere. He had learned by accident what Cassie would refuse to confess openly. He had learned by another accident the man's real views. Yet he could not interfere.

They waited, therefore, sitting in the twilight. They waited a whole hour while Oliver, pleading his cause, broke that promise of secrecy as to their wishes. Laurence stood at the window silent, his face, could they have seen it in the twilight, sad and anxious.

Then the old men began to talk.

'It will make a great difference to us,' said her uncle; 'we shall no longer be first in her thoughts.'

'The house will be intolerable if she has to leave us,' said her father; 'yet we cannot keep her here after she is married.'

'Clement, we must not begin to think of ourselves. The girl's happiness comes first. And the boy, if I know him, will make her happy.'

Laurence at the window groaned.

When the Bell of St. Paul's struck ten, the door was opened and Althea appeared followed by Oliver.

'Congratulate me,' said the lover. 'Althea is engaged to me.'

Althea ran and fell upon her father's neck.

'If it pleases you, dear: if it will make you happy: if it is what you desire——'

'My child, what can we desire but your own happiness?'

Laurence on hearing the fatal announcement instantly stepped quickly and quietly out of the room.

'And we are not really engaged,' Althea explained. 'It is only—if it will make you happier—a conditional promise.'

'A promise——' said Oliver, 'a promise—with conditions.'

'If I find that I can love him—after a time—we are not in any hurry—and if he finds that he really loves me—but I don't think he ever will—we shall be married. If I find that I cannot love him at any time—to-day or to-morrow—I am free—that is

all. We are not engaged unless—— My dear father, are you satisfied?'

With such conditions and loopholes and hedging round of happiness, ought not the fondest father to be satisfied? It was, however, a pity—a great pity—that Laurence had not stayed another minute in the room.

'And where,' asked the Doctor after taking his share of the kissing, 'where is Mr. Waller? He was here only five minutes ago.'

'He is no longer here,' said Oliver softly. 'When he heard my words he ran away. Doubtless he thought he would not intrude on a family occasion so completely private as this.'

CHAPTER XIII.

GOOD-BYE, SWEETHEART.

When Laurence heard those words and saw the triumphant face of the successful wooer he fled. He ran away. We are so far still children of nature that we cannot always suddenly force ourselves to preserve outward calmness, whatever happens. Still it would have been better had he waited. Then he would have heard the modifications of that boastful announcement. But he fled. He did not dare to look at Althea. He broke away—*evasit—erupit*—he vanished.

This, then, was the end: a rude awakening: for this, he had gone on day after day, every day, sometimes all day long, thinking no danger, lulled and lapped in security, enjoying the sweet companionship of this girl. To be sure, not one word of love had been exchanged: yet he had fallen into a dreamy safety.—Why not? This girl had no lovers: she knew no other young man, except Oliver, and as regards that young man, Laurence felt no jealousy: why should he? Oliver, who seldom came to the house, was a kind of brother. Besides, he knew very well—any man would find this out for himself—that the girl regarded him with friendly eyes if not with the favour which he desired. There was no hurry. Even to be engaged to her would bring him little more than the privilege which he already enjoyed, of gazing upon her, worshipping her, and speaking freely and openly with her about every other subject. Nay, until this day he knew not the depth and devoutness of his worship. When he understood this, he learned also that the discovery came too late. His castle was of Spanish architecture—or it was a castle of cards—and at a touch it fell, tumbling about his ears. Therefore he fled.

He did not, at first, go far. When the residents of Bank Side feel happy and the weather is fine and the evenings light, they stand beside the river and look across and up or down. When they are crushed they carry their wounded spirits to the same spot and seek sympathy of silver-footed Thamesis, sweet Thames, running softly, great Father of the British Floods.

What did Cassie in her great trouble? She crept out alone at night and wept over the river thinking that no one would find her there. 'Twas a leading case. Laurence did the same. That is, he did not weep, but he leaned over the wall and resigned his soul to bitterness. Althea was lost—he had thrown away by his own folly—by his procrastination—such a chance as never came to any man before. By his own miserable folly, he thought, Althea was lost to him. The evening should have been black and thunderous: it was a fine evening after a splendid day: the air was balmy: no night, but a soft twilight, hanging over the city which deepened the shadows and softened the outlines and filled all happy mortals with a sense of repose. There is this strange quality about Nature that when her mood fits our own we take it as sympathetic and kindly intentioned in her: and when her mood is not ours, we are not irritated therefor, but we take no notice at all of her. That she rejoices with us fills our hearts with gladness: that she will not weep with us offends us not.

Althea was engaged. Therefore, Laurence had no perception or sense of beauty in the river under the soft twilight. She was engaged to the man who had no illusions. Love? How could such a man love such a woman? Oh! most unhappy girl—what would be her fate with Oliver?—and oh! most unhappy lover! what his own without Althea? The water lapped the breezes softly and glowed in the evening light, but Laurence heeded it not.

There are many men whom we always, and instinctively, dislike from the very first: we do not invite them to enter our house: we do not willingly sit down to break bread with them: the dislike is a dull and smouldering fire: these men do not actually give us pain by their presence or their existence until something happens which kindles the smouldering embers into flames. Then, dull dislike flares out into burning hate. Just so this young man's dislike of his fortunate rival was now changed into a most active and lively hatred.

When one is in very great trouble and misery: when one is sick and knows not what may be coming next: when one is much harassed by work the mind assumes a curious habit of seeing and dwelling upon trifles. For instance, Laurence presently discovered that he had turned his back upon the river and was now gazing across the road. Through the open window he saw

his cousins assembled. Cornelia, he observed, sat with her hands in her lap, as if she was still sitting in her chair at the Church door—it is complained of all ecclesiastics that they cannot shake their calling out of their looks, their garb, and their manners. This reverend lady sat every evening thus bolt upright, without book or work, as she sat all day. An austere, if dignified, manner of life. Her brother sat opposite her, reading the evening paper. It was the *Globe* which he generally brought home with him and he read it right through, thoughtfully, as much interested in one country as in another and in one subject as another. This catholic spirit he inherited from his father, for the Principal of an Academy should know everything. In one window Flavia trimmed a hat, holding it up to the light, turning it round. She was not clever at work and would fain have sought assistance of Cassie, whose genius lay in millinery. But Cassie sat in the other window silent, sad, and heavy-eyed.

While he gazed upon the group Cassie turned her head and saw him. Then she rose and went out to him, carrying her hat by the strings.

'What is the matter, Mr. Waller?' she asked.

'What should be the matter, Cass?' he replied clearing his throat with a show of cheerfulness.

'Something is wrong. I saw it from the window. What is it? I hear it in your voice. Is it—is it—anything to do with Althea?'

'I am out here to breathe the night air. It is a fine night, is it not? I like the river best when the tide is nearly at its full. Then the water is freshest and the wind seems to come straight up from the German Ocean, doesn't it?'

'Mr. Waller.'

'Oh, you asked me if anything had happened. Well, nothing that we could not expect—I forgot, you see, that I am a stranger and they have been together from childhood and the two old men want it so very much. But it is nothing to me. How should it be? I have only been here six weeks or so. Pity I did not suspect it—but how should I?'

'What is it, then?'

'It doesn't matter to you either, since that business is all over with you. You have left off lamenting the scoundrel who——'

'Mr. Waller.'

'And now he has told the same tale to the girl whom——'

'To Althea?'

'Of course. And they are engaged. That is what I have just learned.'

'Althea! Oh! I never thought—I could not think that Althea—of all women in the world—Althea——'

'Don't blame her—Cassie, child—don't blame her,' said Laurence, hoarsely. 'I cannot bear that the least blame——'

'I am not blaming her at all. Oh! Mr. Waller, I blame myself. For she came and implored me to tell if there was anything—anything at all—between Oliver and me—she wanted to know why I was so unhappy. It was all her love and kindness. And I declared that there was nothing and never had been anything. I told her that falsehood—again and again.'

'Poor child,' said Laurence.

'Oh! I am a wretch. If I had only told her the truth this would never have happened. But I was ashamed. And now I have made you miserable too.'

'You have made Althea miserable, Cassie. Never mind me. She will be miserable for life.'

'How can she be unhappy if she loves him and if he loves her?'

'But she cannot love him. It is impossible.'

'You do not know him, Mr. Waller,' said the girl. 'You think of him hardly because he has—made a mistake—about me—he thought he loved me, you see, and he did not. But of course he loves Althea—any man would—and he is so clever and so bright that any girl would easily be led on to love him, especially if she were led on as he led me on.'

'I think I know him even better than you, and I assure you, Cassie, he is not a man to be led away by any fancies.' Here, it will be observed, Laurence made the not unnatural mistake of taking a man at his own professions. Oliver declared that love was an illusion. Did it follow that he was never to fall into that sweet illusion? 'He does not love Althea and he never loved you. He loves himself—his own wretched self.'

'Well—but you did love her. And oh! Mr. Waller, why did you not tell her so?'

'I thought she knew it.'

'How could she know it for certain unless you tell her? Why, think, Mr. Waller. If a girl make such a mistake as that, how wretched she may be—look at me. Besides, Althea never talked or thought of such things. She isn't like other girls who are always talking about love. Oh! how could you go on so long and never speak a word?'

'I have been a fool, Cassie. And I have lost her—and yet—I cannot understand——'

'Perhaps her father——'

'Yes—yes—her father and the Doctor wished it. That is the only explanation. But does that explain why he should——' he paused. 'Unless perhaps he was found out.'

'What is there to find out?'

'There is a little fact which the Doctor and Mr. Indagine

have kept to themselves. But I know it. I think it explains our friend's sudden change—well, Cassie, it is no longer any concern of mine. I must try and forget her. The story is finished, I suppose—I must go away home again. Perhaps, after a bit, I shall forget. The story is finished. What a pity! What an ending! Now if I were to write that story I would end it so differently.'

'How would you end it?'

'I would turn Althea's heart to the man who does love her. And as for you, Cass, I would harden your heart to the man who has deceived you, and I would make you gay and light-hearted once more—and bring along a prince for you.'

'Oh,' she murmured. 'That can never be. But oh, Mr. Waller, I am so sorry for you—oh! so very very sorry. You brought us all such happiness, and now it is all gone, and you are only made miserable. Oh, I am sorry you ever came here.'

Laurence laid his hand upon the shapely head—it is the action of a brother—and sighed.

'Don't cry, dear girl,' he said, after a while. 'Don't cry, Cass. It is all over and done with. But we are always friends, whatever happens. You have lost—I have lost—we have both lost. We conjugate the past tense of the verb to lose. We are all the more friends over our common loss.'

She gave him her hand, without more words, and left him.

He stayed on the Bank long after the lights in the house were put out and the residents of the Academy had gone to bed; after the trains had ceased to run in and out of Cannon Street; till the silence of night had fallen upon the great City and its river. The silence falls about one o'clock and it ceases—London Silence being like the Summer of Labrador—exactly an hour later, at two of the clock, when the market carts begin to rumble through the street. Finally, in great dejection and with the most bitter self-reproaches, he went up to his own room and so to bed.

It is an aggravation of misery that one must always undress, go to bed, get up and dress again, whatever the condition of mind. For a woman it is worse than for a man. Fancy a poor forlorn maiden, whose lover has left her, having to choose her frock and her ribbons, just as if she was going once more to meet him, to walk among the dewy meadows, to gather the wild rose, and to hear the blithe song of the lark, her hand in his—Poor child! She is left forlorn: and she has got to do her hair prettily just the same.

Laurence went to bed and instantly fell fast asleep. But he awoke with the weight and suffocation of a horrid nightmare which sat upon his chest and choked him. It took the form of Althea—to think that Althea, so fair, so calm, so sweet, should

become a nightmare. It was in this way. He saw himself just as usual rowing with Althea, walking with her, sitting beside her, talking to her father while she sat listening or playing to them. Always Althea met his gaze of overpowering love with the same calm unconsciousness, as if there were no such thing at all as love, as if she had never heard of love. And yet when she got out of the boat, or when their walk was finished, or while they still sat talking, Oliver came in and Althea suffered him to stand on tiptoe in order to kiss her. This kiss was the nightmare: and it continued after he awoke: it became a thought so full of torture that he could no longer lie in bed.

He pulled back the curtains. It was half-past four: the sun was already rising—but he had no eye for the glory of that phenomenon: besides, Cannon Street Railway Bridge spoils the sunrise for Bank Side. He threw open the window and breathed the sweet morning air: the river ran bright and sparkling under the blue sky, crisped by the fresh breeze: the spires and steeples rose clearly outlined: the Cathedral showed every column and every window sharply defined. On the Bank there lounged slowly, because he had no bed and was hungry and on the prowl for what he could pick up, an unclean bird of night, who saw with envy all those barges lying unguarded, actually waiting to be stolen, and remembered with regret that there was not a single fence in the whole of London where he could place a barge if he should fake it. So he crept on his way.

Laurence watched him with interest. The sight of the poor wretch diverted his thoughts. When he had disappeared they returned to the old subject. He *could* not go on as if nothing had happened. What should he do, then?

In some cases there is only one thing to do—namely, to run away. I am always surprised that more people do not run away. There are lots of retreats and refuges for runaways—with nice casual wards in case they have got through their money. And it is a remedy so truly efficacious. You can go right away, where the wicked cease from troubling: where the importunate creditor cannot find you: where the woman you loved and have lost cannot torment you with the sight of her happy face—not that you would wish to see it miserable: where you will read no more nasty ones on your last failure: where the weary take off their boots and are at rest—who would not wish for such a place of repose, such a haven of refuge? Some men, however, stay on: they meanly stick to their business: they meet the assaults of the wicked with fists and sticks: they compass revenge: in love matters they wait—they actually wait—until by the help of time, and the pricks and stabs of other worries, they can get over it. It is true they always do get over it. But how much better to have run away!

Laurence resolved to run away. 'The story is told,' he said. 'I, who thought to play the principal part, am out of it altogether. I can go, now. I will put the river and a great many streets between Althea and myself. I will even'—he sighed heavily—'I will put the ocean between us. I will go away this very morning.'

You cannot go away anywhere at half-past four in the morning, especially from Bank Side, where there are no cabs. The love-sick young man was therefore constrained to go to bed again. Such is the flatness of things. The most dramatic incidents in life have to be interrupted by the small necessities of packing, getting the luggage out of the house, eating, paying bills, and seeing that you have got small change for the journey.

Laurence, however, his mind once made up, went back to bed and fell instantly asleep and had no more nightmares.

In the evening, when the various members of the family returned, they received the following report from Sempronius.

The boy deposed that he was reading when Mr. Waller came downstairs about half-past nine. He was looking grumpy: but he said nothing: he rang the bell for breakfast and walked to the window, where he stood looking out with his hands in his pockets. He was evidently very grumpy. When breakfast came he poured out a cup of tea, broke off the top of an egg, looked at it and pushed it away.

'The Selected at ten a shilling, too,' said Flavia. 'Shameful!'

'He took some bread and butter, drank his tea, and finished breakfast.

'Then,' the boy continued, 'he turned round to me and he said "Boy," says he, with his usual cheek, "you may tell your father I've had a business letter and I've got to leave unexpectedly. No, I'll write that—" So he went upstairs and came down presently with a letter which he put on the mantel-shelf. There it is.' The letter was certainly there in confirmation of this statement. 'Then he asked me if I would mind going as far as Blackfriars Station to get a Hansom Cab for him—which I did. He had got on his hat and his boots when I came back with the cab, and he'd packed up his portmanteau and got it downstairs. Well, he didn't laugh or make any joke or anything: but he pulled out his purse and he gave me a sovereign—a whole sovereign!—Here it is.' No doubt of it; there was the sovereign in evidence. 'And he said "Good-bye, boy, give the letter to your father," and with that he got into the cab and drove away.'

'Didn't he leave any message for Cassie and me?' asked Flavia.

'No, he didn't.'

'Nor any for Althea'

'No—not any message for anybody. But he gave me a whole sovereign.'

'Then,' said Flavia, with more than her usual sagacity, 'something must have happened.'

The letter being opened proved the truth of the boy's statement. Mr. Waller was actually gone in a manner as unexpected and as startling as he had come.

'Dear Mr. Cottle,' he said.

'I have to apologise for leaving you so hurriedly. An unexpected piece of news has obliged me to go away at once. I shall have to leave London and shall not be able to return for any stay with you before I go home to Sydney. But I hope to wish you farewell.

'Meanwhile I thank you all most sincerely for your great kindness to me, a complete stranger: I have completed the business which brought me to Bank Side: I can make no excuse for staying any longer. My stay has been one of very great pleasure throughout. Pray thank your sister and your daughters for all they have done for me. The inclosed will, I hope, relieve me of my pecuniary liabilities to you.

'Very sincerely yours,

'LAURENCE WALLER.'

Lucius opened the cheque. 'He has paid for five weeks in advance,' he said. 'But he has gone! Children, it is pleasant to receive a cheque for five weeks in advance. But we would rather have him back again.'

'Oh,' Flavia sighed, 'he is gone. But the cheque will come in handy. He is gone. Well, it is something to remember. For once in our lives we have known a man who isn't always hard up.'

Sempronius felt the sovereign in his pocket. There are possible consolations, even for the departure of a lodger and a friend. A whole sovereign! But Cassie, who alone knew the secret of his departure, hung her head.

'My dears,' said Lucius, with troubled voice. 'The house seems empty without him. How shall we make up for his loss? He has gone. Mr. Waller has left us. We repeat the words but we cannot understand them. We know that he is gone, but we are not yet sure of it. We are thus strikingly reminded of the mutability of all earthly things. They are fleeting: in fact they fleet and—and—mutable—in the most unexpected manner. We might have known that we could not keep him, and he would not keep us, always. Five and thirty shillings a week in addition was too good to last: and such a friend too great fortune for us: yet that he should go so soon, just as we had learned to trust and to esteem him!'

'And just,' said Flavia, 'as he was beginning to show an interest in Aunt Claudia.'

'I am thankful,' said the other aunt, 'to think that he has seen the Church. I showed him the carvings and the Body.'

'He enlivened us,' said Lucius. 'We laughed while he was here. Why, I think we had forgotten how to laugh. Let us now remember that cheerfulness is a duty: it is peculiar to man —and to the hyæna—to laugh. Mirthful moments give relief to the brain: it is good to be merry. And he told us stories. In his company, children, we have travelled. We have wandered with him over the plains of Australia: we have sailed across the Indian Ocean: we have steamed, always with him, through the Suez Canal.'

'And now,' said Flavia, 'he has left us more dismal than we were before he came.'

'I dreamed,' said Cornelia, gloomily, 'a week ago, that the house was hung with black. A sure sign that some one would be taken.'

'Well, Aunt,' said Flavia, sharply, 'he isn't dead that we know of. And now you come to think about it—there was no letter for him this morning—where did he get the news which called him away? It hadn't come last night or he would have told us. How was he called away? No one came for him. There was no letter. It isn't like him to do things secretly. Something may have driven him away. It couldn't be any one in this house. Could it be Felix? I don't think so. What has happened, I wonder?'

'We do not know,' said her father. 'It is idle to seek. I repeat that we ourselves,' he looked at Cassie—'should take example of a cheerfulness which——'

'Here is Althea,' said Flavia. 'Althea, oh! he's gone. Mr. Waller gone.'

'Gone? Mr. Waller gone? Oh! why has he gone?'

Cassie looked up sharply. There was not the least sign of consciousness in Althea's face. If she knew, if she suspected, she must be the greatest actress that ever lived—to preserve a look of such complete and blank unconsciousness.

'We don't know,' Flavia replied. 'And we cannot understand. He is gone. That's all.'

'Gone without coming to see us? Why, my father is expecting him this evening. Oh! but he will return.'

'Perhaps, he says, to bid us good-bye. That's all.'

'He has gone,' said Lucius. 'He has left a noble cheque. But I would rather he had stayed.'

'He has gone,' said Cassie, feebly. 'Something must have driven him away.'

'He gave me a sovereign,' said Sempronius. 'He wouldn't have done that if he was coming back again.'

'My father has got a poem to read to him,' said Althea. 'Oh! who will take Mr. Waller's place at home? Why did he go?'

'We do not know at all,' Flavia repeated. 'No letters came for him this morning and no messengers called. Yet he says that he has received news which oblige him to go away.'

'There may have been something in the morning paper, then,' said Althea. 'Something about his father, who is a great man out in Australia.'

'We never asked him about his father,' said Flavia.

'His father is the Prime Minister of New South Wales. His name is Sir David Waller. He told Oliver so.'

'Indeed?' Lucius looked up with revived interest. 'This is interesting. The son of Sir David—Sir—David—Waller. Dear me! This is most gratifying. Children, we have entertained the son of a nobleman. I thought—I always did think—that there was in his manner and appearance a something which only noble blood confers.'

'Well,' Althea laughed. 'I do not think there was much noble blood in Mr. Waller's descent.'

'Children,' Lucius continued. 'This is a great honour for us. Since the days when the nobility and aristocracy came here to witness the performance of Shakespeare's plays, the Bank has been deserted by the Great. Really—it is a memorable occasion in the Chronicles of the time-hallowed quarter. And in this house! In the Academy!'

At this point Cornelia suddenly jumped clean out of her chair as if some one had stuck a pin in her. One feels a kind of shame in recording so undignified a thing of the lady, but she did it, with a little cry.

'Sister!' said Lucius, in amazement.

Cornelia sat down again. 'I know now,' she cried breathlessly. 'I know why I recognised the voice directly I heard it. The voice and the eyes. Brother, are we blind? They are the eyes and the voice of my cousin Lucy.'

'Lucy, my dear Sister? But she went away long ago. She left Mr. Norbery and got married. It is thirty years ago. And this young man is the son of Sir David Waller, Sir—David—Waller—Prime Minister—actually—Prime Minister—of the Colony of New South Wales. Our cousin Lucy, if she lives still, must be in—ahem!—humble circumstances. We were always—up to a certain point—kind to Lucy and her sister, but they were, remember, Cornelia, in a humble position, though our cousins.'

'Until Lucy became a snake in the grass,' said Cornelia. 'But for her, Mr. Norbery would, I believe——'

Her brother waved his hand. 'Until that time, then,' he said with dignity, 'we were kind to Lucy and she was grateful. On Sunday she was always welcome to tea. We still wish her well in her present humble position, and in case of need we would again extend our protection. But, Cornelia——'

'He's got Lucy's voice and he's got Lucy's eyes. Stuff and rubbish about Sir David Waller and noblemen and Prime Ministers! Lucy's voice and Lucy's eyes!'

CHAPTER XIV.

IN TIME OF TEMPTATION.

Mr. Joseph Mayes sat in his room at the back of his office. He was resting after the day's work. He had that day sold up a greengrocer, and kindly laid the foundation of ruin for a draper—in a manner which would have done credit to his predecessor. There was therefore a glow of satisfaction in his heart. He was now taking his well-earned pleasure. The fair goddess Pleasure assumes as many shapes as there be figures of mortal men. To every one of us she is our own veritable effigies engaged in doing continually the thing which at the time we love the most. This occupation she varies from age to age, but to millions of honest Britons she taketh the form of a middle-aged or elderly man sitting in an arm-chair with a pipe, a glass of cold without, and the evening paper. The first essential of pleasure is rest: the second, tobacco: the third, drink. All these may be combined with vacuity of mind. But when one gets to the intellectual level of Mr. Mayes, there must be food for the brain. Therefore, the evening paper. And, because of that intellectual level, it was the sprightliest, spiciest and, consequently, the most truthful of the halfpenny organs.

Mr. Mayes, therefore, rested. He was at peace with all mankind. The shallow observer doubts whether a money-lender can be at peace with the world, and therefore his own conscience. Why not? He gets nothing but his bond—his legal rights. It is the business of the good tradesman to buy cheap and to sell dear: the money-lender lets out bags of gold on lease: he asks as big a rent as he can expect to get. He receives, instead of money down, a promise to pay. When he exacts the fulfilment of that promise, why should the debtor curse him, rage at him, and call him sweater, oppressor of the poor, and usurer? Whatever they called him, Mr. Mayes cared nothing. He was at peace with all the world. Though the greengrocer whom he had sold up was at that moment raging

and gnashing his teeth, he felt no enmity towards that greengrocer. Not at all. He had seen so much of this passion, that he felt like a doctor in a hospital or a turnkey in a prison. But the unruffled calm of his soul was to be disturbed, and that in the most unexpected and the most bewildering manner. You shall hear.

In the room upstairs, where there were the pile of papers, the single chair and the table, sat beneath a gas-jet the Chevalier. He wore his flat cloth cap, and for convenience of reading, though in the daytime he did not use them, he wore spectacles. He also had a pipe in his mouth, an old-fashioned German pipe with a big bowl. In his capacity as cook he had his stated hours, but in that of clerk he had none: it was therefore not unusual with him to spend his whole evenings in the room reading through the papers. Why not? He had nowhere else to go: his work was almost mechanical and caused no fatigue: he was as comfortable in that room as if he were wandering among the streets: alone with the papers he could think. Perhaps, as he turned over the pages and plodded through the deeds, looking for nothing but the name of Mr. Norbery, his mind went back to the old, old days before the fatal '48, when he danced and made love, feasted, gambled, drank, squandered and conspired, as lighthearted and as careless as any of his Magyar race. Perhaps he asked himself what had been the outcome of that year of Revolution, defeat, and bloodshed. Perhaps he remembered his own broad lands which had gone to the hands that in Hungary grasp all—those of the usurer—and smiled to think that he himself in his old age had gone the same way as his estates.

Who knoweth the thoughts of an old man? Too soon—too soon—we shall learn them for ourselves—the regrets, the memories, the heart-sinkings, the repentance that pass in endless procession through his brain. No old man has ever yet written of his age: no old woman has ever yet attempted to arrest and set down on paper her flying thoughts—they are not all, I suppose, regrets, like those of the Belle Heaulmière, for her vanished beauty.

> Ainsi le bon temps regrettons
> Entre nous pauvres vieilles sottes.

Many old men write Reminiscences. They are not at all what we want. We have all been young: we all begin to store up our reminiscences as soon as we begin to have any memory at all: let us know what the old man thinks about as he sits in his leather chair beside the fire; when the workers have gone forth to their toil and the room is quiet, while outside the sun falls upon spring blossoms and the lark sings in the

sky, and the clock ticks in the corner, and the dog dreams on the hearthrug, and the ashes drop and the coal cracks in the grate.

The Chevalier made no haste: nor did he take rest: he plodded on, opening one paper, reading it and tossing it, if it did not contain the name of Mr. Norbery, into the right-hand corner. If it did, he laid it aside for further examination if necessary. But as yet he had chanced upon nothing of the least importance. They were the papers which showed the life-work of two very industrious persons: yet they were now of not the least use to anybody. This, as Mr. Vicesimus Cottle might have observed, is the way of man. He toils and moils with a mighty fuss, mopping his brows and puffing and panting, and behold! when he has been dead a year or two the whole of his work is useless and forgotten as much as the crops of golden grain which have been forced to grow by the farmer and have long since been garnered, thrashed, ground, made into loaves and baked and devoured.

The pile on the table at the Chevalier's left hand continually decreased. That on the right-hand corner continually grew bigger. The papers on the shelves gave promise of much more work for many a day to come. He finished one bundle—there was nothing in it—only the papers connected with some old mortgage, bill of sale and so forth—and threw it into the corner. Then he took up the next bundle.

This time he paused and smiled oddly. The Chevalier generally smiled sadly. This time it was the smile cynical, which gave a novel expression to his face.

He took up the bundle lying next to hand, turned it over curiously, and examined the exterior with more care than seemed necessary. In appearance it was much the same as the other papers: there was the discoloration of age and some fading of the ink, but not much: the tape which tied the papers together had lost its colour. The Chevalier, noting these signs, smiled again. Something amused him. Perhaps something in his own mind: a reminiscence of the past.

Then he slowly untied the tape and opened the bundle. Within were several papers. One of these was a document engrossed on parchment: it was endorsed 'Last Will and Testament of Samuel Norbery.'

'Last Will and Testament of Samuel Norbery,' the Chevalier read three times over. Then he laid it down. 'This is very interesting,' he said. 'I am glad that I waited for the paper to take its proper turn. Yes——' He examined a corner of the outside sheet which had been folded over and showed a few lines written in very small character. 'Yes: there is no doubt. This is indeed remarkable. Now I think I know who is Mr. Norbery's

heir. Fortunate young man! Fortunate indeed! Yet—who knows? I think there are not many in Southwark who can write the Magyar tongue—' He looked at the writing in the corner. 'Who knows? Fortune is deceitful. Now she smiles. And then, again, she frowns. Who knows if the Heir is indeed fortunate?'

He spread open the paper upon the table and began to read it with great care. Suddenly his face expressed the utmost astonishment. 'Is it possible?' he cried. 'Why—what can this mean? Have I mistaken the packet? That is quite impossible. I marked it instantly and wrote this note upon it when he left the room. What does it mean?'

There were two other inclosures in the packet. One of these was an ordinary letter, folded, and endorsed 'Directions for Mr. Norbery's Will:' the other was a packet of three or four big blue sheets pinned together, and endorsed 'Draft of Mr. Norbery's Will.'

Then the Chevalier rose and, taking these documents in his hand, he descended the stairs.

'Oh!' said Mayes, turning his head languidly, mind and body being now completely at rest. 'You think you've found something, do you? You've found something. Well, now, Chevalier, won't it keep till to-morrow?'

'I think it will keep if you wish it. And I also think that you will be glad to have it now.'

'Out with it then—' He stretched out his hand. 'Give it over. Well now, Chevalier, I've been thinking that you might find something before long if only to pay for your keep. Hand it over—what is it, man? What are you looking so mighty mysterious about?'

'It is called the Last Will and Testament of Samuel Norbery,' the Chevalier replied gravely.

'What?' Mr. Mayes dropped his pipe, which broke into fragments, and upset his gin-and-water. But he heeded not either disaster. 'What?' he repeated. 'Say that again.'

'The document which I have found on the table,' replied the Chevalier gravely, 'is endorsed "Last Will and Testament of Samuel Norbery."'

'Oh!' Mr. Mayes leaned forward with staring eyes and red cheeks. 'Oh! At last!' he groaned, but not with pain or sorrow.

'I have opened and read it,' the Chevalier went on. 'It is witnessed by yourself.'

'Ay—by myself—and by Backler's clerk.'

'And by Mr. Backler's clerk. It is dated——'

'Give it over, Chevalier. Let me have it.' Mr. Mayes clutched the paper greedily. 'Oh! I knew it would be found at

last. Yet how could it escape? They searched all through the old man's papers and through Backler's papers and couldn't find it. Yet here it is, a big bundle, endorsed outside. Chevalier, how could a big bundle like this get mislaid? You might as well mislay a barge loaded with petroleum casks on the Bank. It's a very curious thing.' He turned over the papers as if their appearance would enlighten him. 'What shelf did it come from?'

'I found it on the table.'

'Well—anyhow—here it is. Lord! I remember signing it. And now we shall know how he left his money. Somebody will be a lucky man when this will is proved. But it's got to leave my hands first. His last will. I remember as if it was only yesterday when it was signed.' He nursed the bundle like a baby while he allowed his memory to go back to the past. 'It was signed in Lawyer Backler's office—his own room at the back. How in the world could a great big paper like this get lost? To be sure, when he went silly with so much rum-and-water anything might have got lost. Yet such a paper as this—with such an endorsement—and us all searching everywhere. Where did you find it?'

'Among the papers on my table,' the Chevalier repeated.

'It was in the lawyer's own room, I remember,' Mr. Mayes went on regardless of the correction—now pleasantly launched upon the sea of memory. 'It is thirty years ago. Yet I remember the very morning. It was a baking day in summer——'

'In winter,' said the Chevalier.

'How the devil should you know? You weren't there. You were dodging the police in your own country—that's what you were doing. A scorching hot day it was. We'd just put in an execution for a young fellow—Chemist he was with a shop in Newcomer Street. The Chemist he went on like a madman, I remember, and his wife cried and said they were ruined. Mr. Norbery spoke up like a father, as he always did: told him it would be a lesson for the future against extravagance and getting into debt, and if he borrowed money of honest people he must pay it back—and so on. It was beautiful to hear Mr. Norbery rebuking one of his clients for extravagance while he was selling him up. I never could reach to it, never.' Mr. Mayes sighed. 'Afterwards the Chemist couldn't get a place and he went and made a hole in the river. From Southwark Bridge, he did, and his wife went off her chump. Well—when we'd done with their job, the Guv'nor turned short on me, "Mayes," he says, "you've got to witness my will," and we walked together to Backler's office in the Bridge Road. Thirty years ago it was. I remember it was the time when he'd got his dead wife's cousin for his housekeeper—Lucy—what was

her name? And she offended the old man by marrying a chap down at Rotherhithe—a boat-builder he was, Waller by name, and the old man sold him up too, pretty sharp, just to let him know that you couldn't go again Mr. Norbery for nothing. But I never heard what became of them. This was the Will I signed'—he patted the document tenderly. 'Lord! To think that it's found. Chevalier, I'm most afraid to open it. Yet there can't be anything for me in it. That's certain. I wonder how he left his money. I remember how I signed it. Mr. Backler's clerk—he's dead now—died three years ago in the workhouse—he signed first and I signed next.'

'No,' said the Chevalier, 'you signed first.'

'What are you keeping on interrupting for? Don't I tell you I remember his signing first?'

'Look at the will then.'

Mr. Mayes opened it. The Chevalier was right. His own signature came before, not after, that of the unfortunate Pauper.

'Well, now,' said Mr. Mayes, 'that shows what memory will do. Now if you'd put me in the box I'd ha' sworn that I signed last. Lord! I remember as well as . . . and here's just the contrary. Why—I was no more than twenty-five or so, but I knew a little about Law, and I knew that if I was a witness there could be nothing for me, and I did think that after I'd served the Guv'nor since I was twelve he might have remembered me with a trifle. Not he! Well now, that's a queer trick for memory to serve me. Yes, there's the old man's signature—his "s" like print, with a dot at both ends: and his "y" with a curly tail and a dot on both sides of the tail: and there's mine—though I didn't think I wrote so well in those days. Mine is a hand that improves by practice. No, I certainly thought I had a clumsy fist in those days.'

'You said it was on a summer morning,' said the Chevalier.

'A summer morning it was.'

'Look at the will then,' the Chevalier repeated.

He pointed to the date. Mr. Mayes read and looked as one who finds the solid earth sinking beneath his feet. 'Lord!' he cried. 'I'm wrong again—"December the eighteenth!" Why, I'd ha' sworn—there was the Chemist and the shop: the man sputtering with rage and his wife all of a tremble—and—and the hot sunshine out o' doors. Why, I remember walking in the shade. Chevalier, what's the meaning of it? Do you think I've got a softening? To be sure it was thirty years ago.'

'Eight,' said the Chevalier.

'Thirty, you fool!' Mr. Mayes turned very red at the third correction of fact. 'How the devil should you know?'

'Look at the will again.'

Mr. Mayes looked again. The full date was December the

eighteenth 1879. He gazed upon the date with open mouth. He could say nothing. He was quite confounded. For his memory had changed eight years into thirty: it had changed winter into summer: his own age from twenty-five to forty-seven: and his own signature from second to first. These are very wonderful tricks for memory to play.

He looked at the Chevalier and shook his head, because language failed him.

'I leave it with you,' said the clerk. 'I shall go to bed.'

'Stop—stop. Tell me first—before I read it—am I awake and in my senses?—tell me—how did the old man leave his money?'

'He left it all to Althea, daughter of Clement Indagine, to be paid over to her on the day when she should marry and change her name. Meantime, until her marriage, the whole was to be in the hands of trustees.'

'Who are the trustees?'

'Backler the Solicitor, and you—Joseph Mayes. But there's more in the Will.'

'Go away,' said Mr. Mayes faintly. 'Go away, Chevalier—I must—I must read it for myself.'

He read it through three times. First he read it as quickly as he could—being but a slow reader at the best. Then he read it twice over more slowly. Then he put the Will aside and read the other documents—Mr. Norbery's own letter of instructions and the Solicitor's draft.

Never in all his life had he been so bewildered. He remembered the hot summer morning, the wailing of the Chemist's wife, the signature of the lawyer's clerk followed by his own, in Mr. Backler's office, thirty years before. But for the life of him he could not remember the winter morning eight years ago, when he signed first.

'I could have sworn——' he repeated. In fact many times over he did swear. And yet the Will, dated Dec. 18, 1879, stared him in the face.

For the moment the disposition of the Will hardly concerned him. He was trying to remember—and he could in no way remember—signing that Will. Eight years ago, not thirty. And he himself appointed Trustee, with nothing for his trouble. That little fact, certainly, was exactly like the old man.

Only eight years ago, and yet he could not remember: while of the previous Will, that made thirty years before, destroyed, no doubt, in favour of the new Will, he remembered all those details which he had set forth. A very strange situation, a truly original and previously unheard-of situation, that a Will should have been found after the Treasury people had searched everywhere: a Will not thrust away in some corner, but lying

boldly among other papers: a Will witnessed by himself: only eight years ago—and yet he could not remember anything, not the least thing in the world about it.

Bewildered with this extraordinary trick of memory, Mr. Mayes stimulated his brain with a drink—with two—three drinks. Before going to bed he had succeeded in recalling all the circumstances of the case: he saw, quite clearly, the old lawyer; the lawyer's clerk, also an old man; Mr. Norbery bent with age, a tottering old man, gathered together with himself, in the lawyer's office, the Will spread out upon the table: outside, a cold December morning with snow and sleet. Yet, curiously, when he took up the pen to witness the signature, the figures in the interesting group were transformed, and the season was changed as if in a scene at the Pantomime. It was a hot morning in summer: the lawyer and his clerk and Mr. Norbery himself were no longer old men, but in the prime of life—Mr. Norbery especially upright and straight, iron grey, fifty years of age: and he himself a young man, in appearance a working man, who wrote with difficulty and handled a pen with less freedom than a chisel.

He carried the Will to bed with him and put it under his pillow. But he was unable to sleep. When he dropped at last into an uneasy slumber he dreamed a hundred disquieting and uncomfortable things. And he awoke at six o'clock with a start, and sat up broad awake at once, fancying that he had not yet even read the Will.

He read it through very carefully. 'There was more in it,' the Chevalier said. Yes—there was much more in it.

The Testator, Samuel Norbery, gave the whole of his property, both real and personal, to George William Backler, Solicitor, and Joseph Mayes, Clerk to himself, upon Trust to pay his debts, his funeral and other expenses, and to accumulate the residue of his property until the end of the year 1887, or until his grand-niece, Althea Indagine, daughter of Clement Indagine, then resident at No. 12 New Thames Street, Bank Side, gentleman, should change her name either by marriage with some person whose surname was not and never had been Indagine, or by public announcement, and that if the said Althea Indagine should marry such a person within the term aforesaid, the said Trustee should hold the whole of the Property in Trust for her absolutely.

But in case the said Althea Indagine should not contract such a marriage within the term aforesaid, the said Trustees were to become possessed of the said residue and accumulations upon Trust for Oliver, adopted son of Robert Luttrel, Physician, of 12 New Thames Street, Bank Side.

The whole of this magnificent property to be handled by

himself, in Trust! and to think that six years had passed without his having any of that handling! All that property in Trust to manage!

Then Mr. Mayes arose hurriedly and dressed, and went downstairs before his clerk had opened the shutters, swept out the office, and taken in the milk.

When breakfast was served he appeared with an unusual smile and a most friendly nod and looked about him with a cheerfulness quite uncommon, for Mr. Mayes, like the greater part of mankind, generally began the day grumpily. In his coat pocket was the will.

'Bacon and eggs,' he said. 'You've a light hand with the frying-pan, Chevalier, I will say that of you. Take another egg. Here's one browned beautiful. Well, nobleman, I've read the Will right through.'

'You have read the Will right through,' the Chevalier repeated gravely.

'Yes, and a most wonderful thing it is. I don't know what they will say to it at the Treasury. I'll make a few inquiries first before we move; meantime, not a word, remember.'

'Not a word,' repeated the Chevalier, looking at him strangely.

'As for that poor girl, I'm sure I'm delighted.'

'You do remember signing the will, then?'

'Memory plays strange tricks sometimes,' Mr. Mayes replied with some confusion. 'But a good sleep sometimes sets all to rights. It's the work that tells, you see; when a man is tired, he doesn't remember everything.'

'The work that tells'—the Chevalier was very odd in his manner this morning.

'Nobleman,'—Mr. Mayes assumed his most benignant smile—'we're old friends by this time, ain't we? Certainly, says you. We know each other at last, don't we? Why, to be sure we do, says you. I've been a considerate employer, haven't I? None more so, says you, and a hasty word now and then doesn't count, between pals. If you were a younger man and could run about a bit faster, you should be a partner, Chevalier, instead of a clerk. That is what you should be.'

The Chevalier bowed his head gravely.

'A lucky day it was for you when I picked you up, a very lucky day. You were in rags, I remember.'

The Chevalier held up the skirt of his coat and pointed to his cuffs.

'Well—you are rather ragged still, Chevalier. But it's warm weather now. Before the cold sets in you shall have a new thick coat—rely upon that promise—if it is only a reward for finding this Will. I took you in out of the street.'

'You did.'

'I made you my clerk——'

'And your cook and messenger,' said the Chevalier.

'No one cooks so well as you, and no one handles a frying-pan or a griddle with more feeling. I always feel at meals, that it's a blessing for both of us to have well-cooked wholesome food —well—you've had light work—you can't deny that.'

'I do not deny it.'

'You've had the run of your teeth: enough to eat, haven't you?'

The Chevalier bowed gravely and spread out his hands.

'For your bedroom, you have a spacious, lofty and well-lighted apartment in the roof, commanding a splendid view of the rising Surrey hills. In the daytime you enjoy the use of a noble reception room'—it was the back office, in which they were sitting—'replete, I am sure, with every comfort—' it contained a table and two chairs, one a wooden arm-chair, the other without arms. 'With every comfort,' Mr. Mayes repeated. 'And with all the latest improvements: you have a splendid kitchen with a beautiful range: you have the unrestricted use of a garden'—he looked out of the window upon the black patch with a single grimy laurel in it—'small and compact and elegantly shrubbed. You have a refined home and a cheerful if limited circle: my society—mine: diet unlimited and drink in moderation. You would also have the use of a bath if the pipes were in order. And in return, such light work as has to be done. Don't think, Chevalier, that I grumble at the cost. It is a Christian duty to entertain Foreign noblemen, as well as one's fellow-creatures, especially when they are in rags and patriotic in their disposition. I do not grudge it, I say, Chevalier, I'd do it again.'

'What do you ask me to do?'

'Well——' Mr. Mayes looked uneasy. 'First of all, say nothing. Do you know the girl?'

'I know her.'

'Tell her nothing,' he repeated.

'I shall tell her, for the moment, nothing. I have already promised. I wait to see what happens next.'

'And look here, Chevalier——' he shuffled his feet and his eyes fell. 'Memory is a very rum thing. It's the rummest thing there is. You took me by surprise last night. I was thinking about something else. Perhaps a man may have a kind of softening and not know it. As for thinking it was thirty years ago and in the summer—when it was eight years ago, and in the winter. Ha! ha! that's a good joke—we'll have our laugh over that—to ourselves, Chevalier, won't we? To ourselves; not with other people—we won't take anybody else into that joke. I suppose—but I wouldn't say that outside—that I was a little drunk.'

'You were perfectly sober.'

'I must have been a little drunk—I had some gin-and-water before supper, and what with the beer at supper and the gin-and-water after supper——'

'You were perfectly sober,' the Chevalier repeated.

'Oh! very well—then—it comes to this, Chevalier, you must hold your tongue about it.'

'You remember now that you witnessed the will eight years ago.'

'Certainly. Quite well. Certainly. How could I ever have made such a——'

Then Mr. Mayes caught the Chevalier's eyes, and there was a look in them so queer, so strange, so monitory, that he left the sentence unfinished and returned to his bacon and eggs.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GUARANTEE IS CUT OFF.

SOME men carry good luck with them wherever they go—good luck to others if not to themselves. Others carry bad luck with them; they are accursed with the possession of the Evil Eye: those who become associated with them presently fall into some kind of trouble, even though the unfortunate cause—he who brought the ill luck in his pocket—may still continue to prosper mightily. It seemed, for instance, at first, that the young man from the ends of the earth had brought with him every kind of happiness; yet behold: In the house which had sheltered him there was one girl who wept when she was alone and hung her head when she was in the family circle. And in the other house which had given him hospitality, there was a man whom he left restless and discontented, and a girl whom he had taken out of monotony and stagnant calm and filled with new thoughts. Now the putting of new thoughts into a resident of that house was like the turning of a rushing mountain stream into a still, placid mountain tarn. Before Laurence came to these distant shores from far Australia, the inhabitants were even as those peaceful, tranquil, contented Caribs before Columbus touched the shores of Hispaniola. The Caribs knew few arts and desired to know no more. They lived and loved after the manner of their ancestors; some of them, perhaps, even ate up each other, following the same time-honoured example. On Bank Side, Oliver, contented with his salary of three pounds a week, courted Cassie, and was gradually forgetting the abominable principles he had learned in Germany; he lived the simple life and thought

of science day and night. Althea's boat lay riding on the flood while that river nymph saw troops of ghosts walking upon the banks and gliding in splendid barges up and down the river. The Poet was preparing for posterity the Complete Edition of his Poems; in a work designed for posterity no one is ever in a hurry: it may extend for a thousand years and one would not grow tired of it. Now—now—as in those lovely Caribbean isles after the advent of the white-winged ships, all, all was changed. The old contentment was gone: and he who could have set things right was also gone, no one knew where. More misfortune—much more misfortune—was to follow.

Take the unhappy case of Lucius himself.

Up to forty years of age the career of this legal functionary was one of great success and well-merited honour. He bore his success and his honours with becoming dignity. At the age of fifteen, when he left the paternal Academy, he entered as a junior—nothing but a junior—a boy clerk—in Chambers, being in the service of half a dozen gentlemen, for the most part newly called to the Bar. When the others drifted apart, Lucius attached himself—at a small Guarantee—to one who presently began to attract the attention of solicitors and rose rapidly into practice and to that kind of income which so much glorifies and illustrates the dignity of the Bar. In due course, Mr. Polter assumed silk; he became Polter Q.C. The Guarantee then touched the respectable figure of 200*l.*, in addition to which there were the clerk's fees, so that Lucius was in the receipt of an income far beyond anything he had ever expected, and stood among the most envied of his brethren who assist upon the Higher Branch.

The Barrister's Clerk occupies a unique position in Clerkdom. His income, not his Guarantee or fixed salary, rises and falls with that of his master. There is thus established a kind of partnership: or rather, there is the relationship of client and patron. If the patron or the lawyer has a bad time, it is shared by the client or clerk. When the patron is successful, the client, like the Pope, leads a happy life. But, as in every other earthly career, there are many who fail in this blessedness of a patron's success and never rise above the Guarantee. And, as in all other professions, there are many kinds of men who follow it. There is the dignified clerk, for instance, such as Lucius Cottle, whose manners are founded on those of the Bench, rather than the Bar. There is the convivial clerk who drinketh with other clerks, even with those of the Lower Branch, and hath no pride in his calling, and may be seen in billiard rooms and music halls. There is again the clerk who brings business: he presents an affable and cheerful countenance; he has a warm grasp and a sunny smile, and he has a cold heart: in these days, it is such a clerk as is most desired.

There was no more dignified clerk in the Four Inns of Court than Mr. Cottle: nor was there one who was more respected in both branches. Polter Q.C. was envied for the possession of this Prince, Paragon, or Phœnix of Clerks. He was supposed to cause the flow of business as the moon causeth the flow of tides. No clerk ever received a brief with a finer air: he conferred a favour by taking it: he did not display gratitude; his was the obliging party, not the obliged.

'We are very busy just now,' he would say, lifting a brow preoccupied with the cares of work. 'But you may leave it with me; we will do what we can for you.' Nor did any clerk rate his master's services at a more princely value.

Polter would have been made a judge: everybody said that he was certain to be made a judge: in that case one of the snug little berths of which there are so many in the Courts of Law would have been found for Lucius. Alas! The Lady Atropos —let us speak of her with awe—cut a certain thread with her scissors and Polter Q.C. had to retire from chambers, club, Cumberland Terrace, and his wide circle of friends and the world. He gave up practice and fell asleep in Kensal Green. Never did a greater misfortune befall any Barrister's Clerk. That was five years before this history begins, when Lucius was forty years of age.

Everyone, at first, said that the man would be fortunate who should secure Polter's clerk. But then every man in good practice had his own clerk already. Therefore, Lucius had to look among the rising men. He attached himself to one who had all the ambition requisite for the receipt of the most enormous income, but lacked the power of convincing solicitors that it would be to their advantage to give him that income. This aspirant thought that business would follow in the train of Polter's clerk, and retained him, at first, on the old Guarantee.

The result was not quite what was expected. For though some of the clerk's old friends stood by him, the new master was not a Polter.

Then the Guarantee was reduced.

A second and a third time it was reduced.

It now stood at the figure—ridiculous when one considers the ability of the recipient—of . . . but no, 'twere indelicate to set it down.

Five years passed. The learned Counsel, who had once seemed one of the coming men, rose no higher. His chance was gone: he would never get any higher endorsement of the few briefs which came in: dignity was lost upon such a master. The chambers were shared by three or four young gentlemen, who talked, smoked cigarettes, read French novels, sat on tables, and told each other stories—and of what flippancy!—and had

no feeling, either for the dignity of a clerk or the gravity of their profession. One of them spent his whole time in writing for the magazines: he was known to have written a novel, for the production of which he had paid a large sum, and he was said to have succeeded in getting a farce accepted at the Melpomene Theatre—a farce—and a novel—oh! dread Shade of Polter!

The last blow fell; the Guarantee was cut off: Lucius was informed that his services, in the depressed condition of business, could all be performed by a boy. He could, therefore, take a month's notice or a month's pay. The blow was not unexpected, yet, when it fell, it was like the stroke of a hammer on the temple, for it stunned this clerk and for a whole morning left him speechless. The vivacious young gentlemen told their stories within hearing, but he heard them not. He sat at his desk, but though there was no work to do he held pen in hand and thought that he was driving it.

At the same moment another disaster fell upon the unfortunate family. Misfortunes are gregarious, as is well known: they love not solitary ways: they will still be moving, if they can, in troops.

We must not blame the Manager of the St. Paul's Cathedral branch. He is responsible for the conduct of the business: if things go wrong it is he who is blamed: he is not, again, the Proprietor: if he were, he could afford sometimes to pass over, to pardon, to accept excuses, to give time, to be moved with compassion. A manager cannot permit himself any of these pleasures.

It was Cassie's duty to receive visitors, to point out to them the various styles in which grace and comeliness such as theirs may be represented by the sun: to take their guineas and to show them such civility as would give this *atelier* a good name. As she was an obliging girl of pleasing address, and appearance to correspond, she had hitherto given satisfaction to the Manager. Alas! since her trouble began, all this was changed. Her smiles vanished: her manner was short, her appearance sad; and as day followed day, there was no change in these signs of trouble and distress.

'See now, young lady,' said the Manager. 'Things can't go on this way, you know.'

'What way?' asked Cassie perfectly well understanding.

'What's come over you? What's the matter with you?'

'Nothing,' said the girl.

'That's nonsense, and you know it. Where's your cheerfulness? where's your old smile, and your good looks? Well—it's no concern of mine what the trouble may be, but don't you see that we can't go on?'

'I do my work,' she replied.

'Yes, you receive the people as if you wanted to cry over

them. Hang it! People won't be cried over: you might just as well pray for 'em. And then they go away and say the girl looks so miserable that she must be ill-treated—who ill-treats you in this house, I should like to know?'

'Nobody.'

'Nobody, of course not. But we get all the credit of it. Why, you are actually bringing a bad name on the place. We can't go on, you know, we really can't.'

'What do you want me to do?'

'Get back your cheerful looks, my girl, that's what I want you to do. If you can do that I've no complaint to make. If you can't, why then, you see, we must consider our position.'

In a week's time, Cassie remaining contumacious in melancholy, the Manager did consider the position. Now when a business man considers a position, he is not like a military man engaged in the same occupation. He is not going to defend or to storm that position. He is going to put an end to it. The position therefore vanished. Cassie received a week's notice. Alas for the persecution of Fate! It was on the same day that the Guarantee was withdrawn.

Mr. Cottle came home that evening with an air of increased dignity. He at first said nothing, but took his arm-chair, and sat bolt upright without book or newspaper, his thin legs crossed, his hands upon the arms of the chair, his head erect, as one who awaits buffets of fortune.

It was an attitude for a gentleman in time of trouble undeserved. Flavia, the most sympathetic of the three as regards her father, was the first to perceive that something had happened—of course, something bad; but she said nothing. Presently Cornelia, from her chair, became also aware that something had happened. The uneasiness of anticipation is as catching as mumps. Sempronius perceived that something was in the air; he, too, was arrived at that stage of experience when things unusual are expected to be things unpleasant.

Cassie suffering on her own account regarded not her parent. Besides she was looking out of the window. She saw and felt nothing but her own sadness.

The Master of the house, not unconscious of awakened curiosity, sat in silence: from time to time a smile passed over his face, as of one who endures, or a gentle nod, as of one who accepts: but he would not too quickly satisfy curiosity. His own admirable behaviour under misfortune pleased and consoled him. Does it not always console the sufferer when he can feel that he has done or said the right thing? Consider the frequent funerals of the Mile End Road, where they still know how to do justice to a funeral. As the men in black walk stately before and beside the bier, you may look into the carriages and

mark how the grief of the bereaved is visibly consoled by the admiration of the people on the pavement. They sit upright with conscious pride: the women bridle and smile: the men nudge each other. A family which can do things in such a style is indeed one which confers honour on its members.

When Lucius presently arose and sought the book with which he illustrated every difficulty in the conduct of life—I mean his father's work, which was his guide in doubt and his fount of consolation in trouble—Flavia understood that the position was serious indeed.

He opened the book and laid it before him. Then he turned over the pages and cleared his throat as one who is about to commence Family Prayers. He then read aloud, with intervals for meditation, detached maxims or sentences as he found them in the volume. The effect was as saddening as the ringing of a knell or the firing of minute guns at sea.

'When Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar could not console the afflicted Patriarch, the Hand which had laid the suffering upon him was pleased graciously to remove them. With this example before him, the wise man waits.'

'Children,' said the expositor, 'the wise man waits.'

Flavia was unable to withhold a murmur of admiration. Never was such a man as father for behaving in the right way. Other sufferers waltz around and let themselves rip: he on the other hand—but what had happened to him?

The reader went on:—

'"Belisarius, blind and old, extends his hand and begs an obolus. Crœsus is laid upon the pyre to be burned alive. Dionysius teaches a school. These are the commonest illustrations of Fickle Fortune. We need not go to history for examples of her inconstancy, because every workhouse presents us with many proofs. Let us read in the Book of Life, which lies open to all of us, lessons that may keep us sober in times of fatness, and resigned in times of dearth. Should the worst happen to us we have at hand instances parallel with our own case or even worse." These, children, are the words of your grandfather. The wise man is resigned in times of dearth, that is, I take it, not dearness, because I have always found things dear, all my life—but, in times of scarcity, when not only luxuries have to be abandoned but necessaries have to be straitened.'

At this point Sempronius, who was sitting behind his father, clapped his hands to his ears so as not to hear these signals of distress. Besides he had a most wonderful book to read: it was about an heroic boy with Nelson. And Cassie about this time became conscious of something unusual and turned her head. And Cornelia coughed quietly. The action is with some an indication of satisfaction or of pride which must manifest itself in

some way. In the Church one cannot clap hands, stamp with the feet, or cry encore. Therefore one coughs quietly. Well-mannered ladies in a certain rank of life seldom mark their approval in any other way.

Her brother turned two or three pages more, and in the voice of a clergyman at a funeral began again:—

'The wants of the body are few. The chances of Fortune cannot touch the soul. He who——'

'Father!' cried Flavia, springing to her feet, 'what in the world has happened?'

Her father closed the book, laid his left hand upon it and thrust the right hand into his bosom. Then he rose and stood upon the hearth and looked round him.

'Children,' he said, 'and Sister Cornelia, I have this day received intimation that the Guarantee is withdrawn.'

'Lucius,' cried his sister, 'you don't mean to say that you are out of place?'

'We don't call it "place," Sister, in the Higher Branch. The Guarantee, I said, has been withdrawn—the Guarantee.'

'Well, father,' said Flavia, 'but such as you can easily find another—Guarantee. You have only to lift your little finger. Why, I have often wondered at your staying so long where there was so little for you.'

'I hope I may find another Guarantee. At the same time I do not disguise from myself that business is bad and such an official as myself, with thirty years of experience, may not immediately command the price which he not unnaturally puts upon his own services. I have received a month's notice with option of a month's pay; this I have taken, because I shall then have leisure to look around. Meantime, my children, until something else is found there is no income and only the month's pay in hand.'

'Well, I've got twenty-five shillings a week,' said Flavia, 'and there's Aunt, and Cassie has got eighteen shillings. We shan't starve for a bit.'

'Oh!' said Cassie, 'I was going to tell you. It is a terrible misfortune—I didn't know how dreadful it was going to be, I've had a week's notice too.'

'You, Cassie,' cried Flavia, 'why I thought—what have you done now?'

'The Manager wants more cheerfulness. He says he won't have people cried over.'

'Oh!' said Flavia, 'this is terrible.'

'I dare say I shall find another place,' said Cassie. 'Anything will do—what does it matter? Perhaps they will take me on at an undertaker's.'

'Oh! what shall we do?' cried Flavia in despair. 'This misfortune on the top of the other.'

'My children, we have need of all the fortifications of philosophy.' Lucius stepped to the table again and opened his book.

'The other night,' said Cornelia—'last night it was—no—the day before yesterday towards the morning, I dreamed of rainbows. I might have known they meant a change of fortune.'

'Well, aunt,' said Flavia, 'if you must dream, you had better dream a way out of it, I think.' She stepped over to her sister and laid her arm round her. 'Cassie, dear,' she said, 'must you go? Won't they keep you on if you come to look happy again? Try, dear—consider—how are we to live? Can't you smile and laugh and joke with them as you used to do?'

'Look happy, Flavia?' The girl turned her wan and sorrow-stricken face. 'Look happy? I? Don't mind me, dear, there must be some place where they want a miserable girl.'

'Oh! I could kill him—I wish I could kill him,' Flavia whispered.

Her father had found another passage and read it—his words falling again upon their hearts like the tolling of that dismal bell of death.

'Virtue makes the mind invincible. It places us beyond the power of Fortune, though not beyond the malice which that Goddess sometimes seems to show. When Zeno was told that all his goods were drowned—"Why then," said he, "I perceive that Fortune hath a mind to make me a philosopher." My children, I am much in the position of Zeno: let me, too, become a philosopher—I will be no longer Lucius but Zeno.'

CHAPTER XVI.

'WHEN LOVE WITH UNCONFINÉD WINGS.'

THE afternoon was as hot as, in August, afternoons can be. In New Thames Street the air was like that of the innermost chamber in the Turkish Bath, where he who dares to sit may have his egg boiled in his hand, and place his toast to be roasted beside him on the seat. It was like the air of a baker's oven. Every brick was a fire brick in a red-hot stove: every stone in the pavement struck out heat in invisible flames that scorched the hands and face. The face of the river trembled with the heat: no boat could live upon it: far away up stream where house-boats are moored, those who were in them pulled down the blinds to shut out the blinding glare of the great heat and lay panting in

the shade: those in town wished themselves by the seaside, the breeze fresh and cool fanning their cheeks: those at the seaside sprawled in the shadow of the rocks and longed to be under some tree in a shady wood: those in the woods longed for the cool bank of a trout-stream on the hillside: those who might have sat upon such a bank stayed indoors: the working man longed for the long cool draught from the pewter in the bar: the City clerk in vain hope of a cool retreat tried the handles of the church doors.

It was perhaps the heat of the day which made Althea restless: it was perhaps the close air of the street which made her cheek pale and drew such a dark ring round her eyes and spread a cloud upon her forehead. She was disquieted: her soul was troubled with unrest and discontent. We who wag grey beards forget this disease of youth—the malady of restlessness, the sickness of yearning after the unknown, the oppression and pain of discontent. Althea was like the child who cries because it wants something but knows not what. She sat at her piano and played a little, letting her fingers wander over the keys. The music brought her no tranquillity. Then she exchanged the music-stool for a chair and took up some work. If needlework cannot steady a woman's nerves, nothing can. Watch a woman when, in a state of nervous agitation, she sits down and takes her work, because she can say and do no more. She snatches the stuff: while her lips move with the words which she does not utter, while her cheeks burn and her eyes flash, the needle flies: the sharp tick as it leaves the stuff is like the beat of a quickened pulse: see—she is still in the paroxysm of her rage, her jealousy, her fears—faster—faster flies the needle. Presently it begins to move more slowly: the medicine works: the nerves are beginning to quiet down: little by little the needle resumes its customary pace; the woman smooths the work upon her knee, and wonders at the progress that she has made, forgetting the swiftness with which that little sympathetic instrument responded to her emotion. Now her eyes are steady, her lips are quiet: she lets the work lie idly in her lap: she sits upright, looks round and heaves a sigh. Should her lover or her husband find her now, she will greet him with forgiveness in her face and a kiss upon her lips.

But the needle failed to cure Althea's restlessness. She threw away the work and went to her bookshelves, which were mostly filled with poetry. As becomes a grandchild of the Muse, Althea read a great deal of poetry. She stood awhile trying to remember something that would suit her mood. Books there are with medicine for every mood except one. When the patient suffers from the restlessness of youth, no poet has ever yet been found who can suit that mood or cure that disorder. She took down

volume after volume, turned over the leaves awhile, and put it back again. Presently some lines caught her eye—I dare say she had read them a hundred times before, but now they seemed to have new force and a new meaning. They were the lines beginning:—

'When Love with unconfinèd wings
Hovers within my gates:
And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates:
When I lye tangled in her haire
And fettered to her eye,
The birds that wanton in the aire
Know no such liberty.'

The sweet extravagance of the verse: the worship of her own name: the foolishness of any man desiring to lie tangled in a woman's hair: the audacity of comparing his soul, free to love, with the 'enlarged winds that curle the flood:' his contentment—oh, fond young man!—with the freedom of love: struck some chord in her own heart. She read the poem a second and a third time, and sighed as she put the book back in its place. No woman really desires to have her hair tangled about her lover—the thing would actually in itself give her no satisfaction at all: but that he should desire it—that he should find a mysterious and wonderful happiness in a thing so foolish—that he should desire to be fettered to his sweetheart's eye—that he should tremble in her presence, and rejoice only to touch her hand—this is the sweetness and the beauty of love. Therefore, perhaps as one who recognises sweetness and beauty in the abstract, without reference to herself, Althea sighed when she laid down the poet.

It was another poet whom she opened next. This girl read poetry as others read novels. It was the good old fashion until sixty or seventy years ago. Then, no one could ever explain why, poetry came down with a crash and has never, financially or fashionably speaking, got up again. It went out of the daily life. Poets nowadays have to sing for very small pay. Novels fell, too, with poetry: they lay confounded in one common ruin. But novels got up again. Needs must that we exchange our own lives and troubles, sometimes, for other lives and troubles. Novels arose, learned lessons from the past, reformed, and prospered again. Some time, perhaps, they may fall again, if ever they grow so dull and so conventional as those of the twenties: temporary eclipse from this cause is always possible. Or, if the daily life, the common lot, is filled with new interests: if dull lives are brightened by new excitements and more frequent pleasures, the novel will perhaps no longer be wanted. But that day is distant.

The book which Althea took down next was the first volume

of Tennyson. She read 'Mariana in the South.' It might almost have been written for Mariana on Bank Side. Why not? Shall the Borough contain no romance? Is not the Bank of silver Thames as fit for love and poetry as the parched and arid County of Provence?

'Ah!' she sung, 'to be all alone:
To live forgotten and die forlorn!'

She sighed again when she put down the book. She looked about her: instead of the high white wall, the green lattice, the dusty vines, the white road, the broad gravel and shallow stretch of the river-bed, the dazzling light, the bare dry hills, the grey olive that never was young, the parched earth of the fields, the mulberry trees stripped of their leaves, on which Mariana looked, she saw the open window, the hot and narrow street, and heard the bustle of the Bank, where the men ran up and down the planks with their barrows and the steamers panted along what they call the Silent Highway.

'Sometimes in the falling day,
An image seemed to pass the door.'

She looked up involuntarily as if to catch a fleeting glimpse of that image, or to hear a footstep at the door. But she saw no image and heard no footstep. That is, there were, outside, the customary sounds with the sledge hammer of the Boiler Works, banging as vigorously as a cabman swings his arms in cold weather; but the only footstep she heard was that of her father in his study.

The poet, too, was restless: he tossed his long locks behind him: he walked about his room: he fidgeted among his books and with his papers.

But he knew exactly—which Althea did not—what made him restless. He wanted Laurence back. He wanted more praise: to a poet, praise is like sunshine: to all of us it does good unless, which rarely happens, we get too much: but a Poet needs it, as much as he needs food for the body.

He drew from an envelope the famous article of the *Saturday Review*; it was now falling to pieces by being constantly opened and read: he knew it by heart: yet he read it again and again. There was one line in it which seemed to give only qualified praise. This passage gave him so much pain that he had acquired the habit of leaving it out: he skipped it: his eye refused to see it. But the rest—the rest, indeed, was beautiful, true, and yet so strictly just. When he had read it through he folded it and replaced it carefully in the envelope.

Then his restlessness, soothed for the moment, fell upon him again. His table was covered with his own manuscript poems. Since the arrival of this wonderful young man—like a young

man in a fairy story—who had come all the way from Australia solely in order to gaze upon him, he had been continually examining and polishing this precious collection. He was going to publish them, some time, when the polishing process was complete. How much immortal verse is withheld from the world because the poet is never satisfied to let it leave his hands! While he is still correcting and polishing—click! he hears the fatal scissors. Then he drops his papers, and presently unsympathetic executors consign them to the waste-paper basket.

Of late years, the poet had written little. Shut up in his little corner of London, removed from the sources of inspiration—for if an artist neither studies man nor nature—if he converse not with gracious lady or simple shepherdess—if he shuts his eyes to the Heavens and the round world and all that therein is, he must surely dry up. Genius must be fed; therefore, Clement Indagine had of late written little: and that little, he could not but own to himself—few poets are so truthful—was but a pale reflection, a thin replica, of what he had written before.

Althea found him wandering as restless as herself among his volumes.

'My dear,' he cried, 'if you had not come to me I must have gone to you.'

'What is it, dear?'

'I don't know. I—I—I want something, Althea.' He said this quite simply and like a child. He wanted something. He sat down and leaned his head upon his hands.

'My dear, I cannot sleep at night. In the morning I am lonely. All day I feel like a prisoner—I have been here thirty years and I have never felt like this before.'

'Perhaps the time has come for you to go back to the world.'

'Yes—yes, that must be it. Mr. Waller said he would take me—why does he not come back? Where is he, Althea?'

'Indeed, I do not know.'

'I thought he had brought me happiness, but he has not. He has brought me nothing but discontent——'

'Oh! father, not happiness to feel that the people love your verses and repeat them and quote them?'

'I want to hear them repeat the verses—I want to see with my own eyes.'

'Then, dear, let us go back to the world together.'

'You and I together? Why, my dear, the world is for men. You could not sit in the tavern drinking with us. I must go alone—or with Mr. Waller. My dear, the world is not for girls. It is a rude, rough place. They hooted me out of it. Can I tell how they will receive me again?'

'Why,—as if there could be any doubt. Have no fear about that.'

'Oh! It is Mr. Waller that I want. Where is he? Why has he gone away?' He began to pace the room impatiently. 'It is not right for him to leave me so suddenly. Why, if he were to come back and to take me into the world, all would be well. Without him—Is it possible, Althea,' he exclaimed in agitation, 'that a few weeks should make such a difference? Six weeks ago I had never seen him: now I miss him every hour of the day. Never was there such a bright and cheerful lad: he laughed and made us laugh: why, had you ever heard me laugh before? Poor child, it grieves me now to think that there was no laughter in the house until this young Australian brought it. Even Oliver never laughed. And then he was full of sympathy—and he knew how to be respectful in the presence of genius: he ought not to have gone, I say—he ought not—why did he go?'

'I do not know. I only know that he is gone. It was a wonderful change that he brought to us. Now that he has gone it is difficult to settle back to the old tranquillity. But we must remember that after all he was a stranger to us—we were nothing to him: at home he lives in a great house: why should we expect him to continue in this humble place?'

'Because, my dear,' said the poet with confidence, 'he took the greatest possible pleasure in my society. That is, I should say, quite sufficient reason. Poets do not live everywhere. In order to enjoy my conversation, he came here, as you know, nearly every evening: in order to please me and to win some mark of my gratitude, he was good enough to show you, my dear, such attentions as a young man can pay to a young lady: he rowed with you, walked with you, and talked with you. Well, it was kind of him. I thoroughly appreciate his motives. I saw through his thin pretences—to others it might have seemed a desire for your society—I, for my part, know better. Well, he has earned my gratitude: he has won my friendship: he has his reward.'

'Yes, dear.' Althea did not dispute this proposition. 'But he had business of some kind to do here, and when that was done he had to go. Could we expect him to stay on just to please us?'

'Nay—nay—but to please himself, child—to please himself. You, who have always lived with a poet, do not quite understand how the poetic temperament may strike the imagination of a young man. To please himself.'

'Perhaps he will come again. He has promised to see us again before he goes home.'

'Then look at the way of it,' her father continued, grumbling. 'He never told us he was going—he just walked out of the house without a word. It was on that evening when you became engaged to Oliver.'

'Father,' said Althea quickly. 'Please understand clearly—I am not engaged to Oliver. I told you at the time—it was only a condition—if I could bring myself to care for him——'

'But, my dear—we thought—your uncle thinks—we all hoped and believed that this was a figure of speech. We were quite satisfied with the condition. Of course a girl cannot be expected to fall into her lover's arms.'

'It is impossible—I thought so then—now I know that it is impossible. Even if he cared for me it would be impossible, father'—she became suddenly resolute insomuch that her father was instantly convinced. 'Never—never—never—would I marry Oliver. The thought of such a thing is horrible,'

'My dear child:' he took her hand astonished at her vehemence: 'my dear, you shall not, unless you please. Let us talk no more about it.' At another time he would have said a good deal, but for the moment he was full of his own sorrows. The best remedy against grieving over others' troubles is to have plenty of your own.

'You were talking of Mr. Waller,' said Althea.

'Yes. And I must say, my dear, that I cannot possibly understand his conduct. What makes it the more remarkable is that he had been invited to congratulate us—to share our family joy. So great was the confidence we reposed in him.'

'To congratulate you?'

'Why, my dear,' her father replied in some confusion, 'we naturally thought—we believed—we hoped, that you were going to make us all happy by accepting Oliver. And your uncle told Mr. Waller in the morning what was going on.'

'Told Mr. Waller? Oh! How could he talk about me in that way?'

'Your uncle was struck—doctors notice things, you know—with a kind of melancholy which seemed to fall suddenly upon the young man. I think something must have happened. He became gloomy and answered in monosyllables. I expected him to call in the afternoon—I had in fact a poem to submit to him. It was one in my Middle style. But he did not come. I wish now that your uncle had pressed him to explain the cause of his gloom.'

'Mr. Waller knew that Oliver——' Althea began with burning cheeks.

'Certainly, my dear. And he was invited to join in congratulations: he came as he had promised: we were all silent and rather anxious, I remember, because, my dear, your future was at stake, and that was cause enough for anxiety—but I could not help observing the young man's changed appearance. He looked haggard—actually white and haggard. He stood at the window and hardly spoke. Something must have happened

to him. Perhaps he was ill. However, our thoughts were with Oliver and you——'

'Never mind about Oliver,' said the girl.

'Well—when Oliver threw open the door and told us what had happened—I mean, what he thought had been promised—Mr. Waller without a single word rushed out of the house. Did you not see him? He rushed. He said not one single word—he rushed out of the house. And next day we hear that he is gone. Did you not see him?'

'No, I did not know,' she replied, but in a voice so strange and constrained that her father was startled.

'Why, my dear,' he laid his hand upon hers—'what is the matter?'

'Nothing—nothing—what should there be?' But her looks belied her words. For her cheek was pale and her eyes were dilated as those of one startled by a revelation. Indeed a revelation had come unto her—the sudden perception of so great a thing that it caused these outward signs of inward tumult. A revelation—nothing less. One that would henceforth change all her life and give new colour to the world around her. In her ears, as if to accompany the revelation, were ringing, in a voice which she knew and remembered, certain words which she had read an hour agone.

'When Love with unconfinèd wings
Hovers within my gates:
And my divine Althea brings—'

'What is it, dear?' asked her father. 'Why do you look so frightened? What have I said? Believe me, dear, Oliver shall not——'

'Oh, never speak of Oliver again—never again,' she repeated, shuddering. 'I cannot bear to hear his name. No—no——' she looked round as if terrified, 'nothing is the matter—nothing. —It is the hot day and I am restless, and oh! I am so lonely and so friendless—so friendless'—she burst into sobs and tears.

Now this elderly divine Maker had been all his life writing of Love, in praise and worship of Love. Of Love the unconquered, Love the Dominator. Of woman's affection and of man's passion he had been making rhymes for forty years and more. But it was Love conventional, Love unreal, that he described. Truth to tell, though his words might be as fiery as those of the eighteenth-century bards who burned and swooned and flamed in rapture and died in ecstasy, his verse could have moved no one. Also, being a man whose thoughts were chiefly occupied with himself, he never observed the plain and common symptoms of love. You have seen in what a spirit he interpreted the young man's attentions to his daughter. Flavia, who had never written any verses—she had indeed never read any except in a hymn-book—

understood these symptoms very well. But the Poet, the Maker of a hundred love poems, could not discover these symptoms even when they were exhibited under his own Parnassian roof, within an inch of his poetic nose.

'Yes, dear,' he said. 'Hush, do not cry, Althea, my dear, we are lonely and friendless'—the tears stood in his eyes as well. 'We are poor and lonely and friendless. We had one friend and he is gone. Hush, my dear, you tear my heart. We are unhappy, we will go away—somewhere—if there is any money—we will try to forget our friend who brought us joy and left us sorrow. Hush, my dear—my dear.'

He soothed and consoled her in his ignorance. But she left him and went upstairs to her own chamber.

For now she knew. Suddenly the thing that other girls would have known from the very outset, she guessed at last. Other girls talk with each other of love: they hear of engagements and live in that great human family where there is continual marrying and giving in marriage. Althea read of love, but it was of an abstract thing: she did not connect it with herself. But now she knew that he loved her—he loved her. Oh! she felt his love encompassing her, as with a garment, and that made of crimson velvet set with pearls embroidered with gold and fringed with lace. She shivered, but not with cold, while her lover hung this robe upon her: she blushed beneath the longing of his eyes: the touch of his hands made her tremble: the sound of his voice filled her heart with joy. He loved her.

She knew now—yes, she knew at last—why she was so restless and so unhappy. Like her father she longed for the return of this young man—because he loved her.

She fled to her chamber. Love himself, who does not always show roguish eyes, stood at the gates with sympathetic face: with one hand he shut and barred the door; and then, armed with a sword, he stood without, an outer guard or tyler, to slay any who should dare to pry into the secret, sacred mystery of a maiden's heart.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOTOR PATH.

Mr. Mayes remained in a condition of the strangest bewilderment. Day and night he was tortured with this failure of memory. Never before had he experienced anything like this wonderful forgetfulness. The solid earth sank beneath his steps: the world was going round him: he felt like losing his wits.

He remembered hard: he set himself to remember with all his soul and all his strength: he looked up the office books of the time for anything that might help him to remember: yet he could not recall the witnessing of that will. That it should be anything but a genuine instrument never entered his head: how could anybody write his signature so that he himself would not know it except for his own? The longer he remembered, the less did he succeed.

Then a truly dreadful thought came into his head and would not be dislodged. It has been hinted that Mr. Backler, deceased, suffered in his latter years some loss of the finer faculties. Elderly gentlemen who take ardent drinks from eleven in the morning till eleven at night often do experience this loss. Mr. Backler, in fact, had softening of the brain: and presented before his death a very mournful spectacle indeed. Now Mr. Mayes could not conceal from himself the fact that he too only sought his bed at night when he could hold no more.

The terror that he was going in the same way became at last intolerable: he could bear it no longer. He was fain to lay his case before a doctor.

The practitioner in whom he confided was a young man newly started in practice, an intelligent person from the London Hospital, who not only possessed enough medical knowledge to pass his examination but also had some tincture of modern science.

'You are suffering,' he said after many questions, the use of the stethoscope, and the examination of the pulse, 'from one of those obscure forms of brain disease which have recently been the subject of special investigation.'

'I thought so,' Mr. Mayes groaned. 'Like Mr. Backler's case.'

'You are lucky,' continued the medical man, 'that science has tackled your disorder.'

'Should I have been a goner?' asked Mr. Mayes, pallid.

'Most certainly you would. Aphasia takes many forms: it is due to many causes: perhaps you have taken too many stimulants: or you have been worked too hard: or you have taken too little exercise. Some men lose the power of speech altogether: others can only say half of what they wish to say: some forget certain things and remember others.'

'That's me,' said Mr. Mayes.

'You remember, I believe, everything of importance except one particular event.'

'The most important thing, pretty well, of any. And I can't remember—try all I know—one single word of it.'

'Exactly.' The young practitioner laughed and rubbed his hands as if this was a branch of business which he really did like. 'Your case grows clearer. Now, Sir, by the aid of a little diagram you will understand exactly what is the matter with you.'

He took paper and pencil and drew a little black circle.

'That's the centre. These lines'—he drew two straight lines radiating from the centre—'represent respectively the sensory path—this with an arrow towards the circle: and the motor path—this one with the arrow from the circle. Your memory carries the events of the past towards the centre by the sensory path: and they start out again by the motor path. You understand? Very well then. In your case there is a breakdown somewhere about here'—he indicated the probable spot by a black dot. 'The breakdown, in fact, has caused temporary central paralysis.'

Mr. Mayes groaned. Already he felt himself like Mr. Backler, incapable of speech or thought.

'Fortunately, as I have said, science has conquered the brain. You may therefore get cured. But there is only one man for your case—of course I mean Sir Wigmore Wimpole of Grosvenor Street. You must go to him without delay. I will make an appointment and go with you.'

'Will it—will it—cost much?'

'A good deal I should say,' replied the young man carelessly. 'A man is generally willing to pay in order to save himself from a madhouse or a grave.'—Mr. Mayes groaned. 'But don't be frightened, you can afford it.'

'What will they do to me?'

'You will perhaps be put through a course of the electric battery.'

It sounded terrifying. The patient groaned. But he thought again of Mr. Backler and how that poor sufferer had to give up everything and didn't know what he babbled, and he made up his mind that he would, if possible, avoid that fate.

He went to the great specialist and laid this case before him. It was a curious and interesting case—even unique. Here was a man who had forgotten one thing—only one thing. Why, we forget thousands of things daily: but we do not forget events which at the time are recognised as truly important: we do not forget the signing of a will disposing of an enormous property: it was the interesting feature of the case that the patient had forgotten a thing which in the ordinary course he would never have forgotten.

Nobody doubted this cardinal point. Therefore they resolved to treat the patient for partial central paralysis. First they cut off all his drink—yea, his beer, his whisky, rum, and gin—as for the juice of the grape Mr. Mayes had never gazed upon the cup when it is red. They made him walk swiftly for an hour before breakfast, an hour before dinner, and another before tea: they put him on diet: in mockery they allowed him his pipe—as if a pipe can be taken without a glass! And every day three times, for four minutes each time, they treated him to electricity. It was horrible. They put one pole at the nape of his neck, and the other at the base of the tongue with the intention of loosening the glosso-pharyngeal nerve. The indignity of this treatment Mr. Mayes bore with greater philosophy than the fearful cost of it, which amounted to six guineas a day. As for carrying on business that was next to impossible, because, as all patients use, he continually exercised himself in finding out by trying to remember if he was getting any better.

He was not: after ten days of the treatment he was much thinner, paler of cheek, much more hungry and extremely choleric. But he still remembered nothing of the will. He could stand it no longer—He then arose and solemnly cursed to his face Sir Wigmore Wimpole, M.D., F.R.S., that great and illustrious Physician, and the whole College of Physicians, and even that sweet and beauteous maid Science herself: he attributed to the great specialist the most sordid motives and he left the place. He was no better: the motor path continued to be obstructed, and Mr. Mayes, though he returned to his old habits, fell into a gentle melancholy expecting the fate of Mr. Backler and a softening.

He thought of the will and of the heiress—a girl named Althea, daughter of Clement Indagine. Why, he knew the man by sight. He lived with a doctor close to Bank Side: he was a shabby-looking man who wore a broad felt hat and a brown velvet coat and had white locks: that was Clement Indagine. He was brother to that Æneas Indagine, junior clerk at Backler's, who ran away about thirty years ago; they turned out to be nephews of the old man, and nobody ever knew it: and their uncle clapped their father into the Queen's Bench for debt, and

let him die there—his own brother-in-law. A hard man, Mr. Norbery: but money must be looked after.

'Chevalier,' he said, 'I've been thinking—about that will, of course.'

'Yes.'

'I must do something: I must give it to a lawyer.'

'You remember signing the will?'

'Why, of course.' The Chevalier looked up from under his thick white eyebrows and Mr. Mayes changed colour and stammered, 'Of course. Didn't I tell you that I remember all about it? What have you got to say to that, eh?'

'Nothing.'

'Very well then. Why the devil shouldn't I remember? Now, then—I've got to do something—the business can't wait about much longer. There will be a row at the Treasury, I suppose, because you can't expect the Queen to let go of that tremendous heap unless she's obliged. But what can they do?'

'If you remember signing the will, what can they do?'

'Chevalier, you know Mr. Indagine. I've seen you walking with him.'

'I know him very well.'

'What sort of a girl is his daughter—the girl who's going to have the money? Do you know her too?'

'I know her very well.'

'Will she go off her head, do you think, when she hears the news?'

'I should think not.'

'She's to have it when she changes her name. That is when she marries—she's only got four months before her. But perhaps she's got a chap already.'

'Mr. Oliver Luttrel says, I understand, that he is engaged to her.'

'Mr. Oliver Luttrel? Lord! to think of that! Why, it's almost providential! He's to have the money if she doesn't marry. Mr. Oliver Luttrel! Why he's in my books already for a trifle—a ten-pound note it was—he's got a place in that City College. Oliver Luttrel—little black-haired chap—ugly little chap—so he's going to marry her, is he?'

'He says so.'

'Then he'll get a quarter of a million with, or without, a wife, unless she marries someone else in the meantime. Lucky beggar—eh, Chevalier?'

'I believe,' said the Chevalier softly, 'that in the long run he will consider himself fortunate indeed.'

'You haven't let on, outside?'

'I have told no one.'

'Good. Hold your tongue a bit longer. And hark ye,

Chevalier, if I can't get something more than the job of managing the estate, I'm hanged if anybody shall. And if I get what I want it shall be the best day's work you ever did to find that Will—remember that now.'

First of all, he thought he ought to call upon Mr. Clement Indagine. Crafty men always like to feel their way carefully.

He did so. He called upon the Poet in the morning, actually disturbing him at his best time. He was taken to the Poet's study, where he sat before his table, covered with precious poems in manuscript.

The white-haired bard looked up, astonished. In the presence of so many books—nothing strikes the vulgar mind with more awe than a room filled with books—and that highly superior face which was lifted to greet him, Mr. Mayes felt small.

'I have made bold,' he said, 'to call—to call—' Here the difficulty of opening the subject presented itself for the first time.

'You have come, I suppose, in reference to my works,' said the Poet kindly.

'Works? I didn't know you had any Works,' said Mr. Mayes.

'My poems. If you represent any Firm of Publishers I fear that your visit is premature. My arrangements are not yet decided. My new volume, it is true, is nearly ready, but I must consult with friends before entrusting them to the care of any Firm.'

'Poems?' asked Mr. Mayes, who knew nothing of any muse.

'My poems,' repeated Mr. Indagine. 'You are, I presume——'

'Lord love you, Mr. Indagine, don't you know me? Boy and man I've been in these parts for forty years and I remember you for thirty, and your brother I remember too.'

'Who are you, Sir?' the poet asked with a sudden change of manner. 'Who are you and what do you want with me? why do you disturb me at this hour?'

'My name is Joseph Mayes—and I am successor to Mr. S. Norbery, Deceased.'

Clement Indagine pushed back his chair. 'I have nothing at all to do with the late Mr. Norbery, or with his affairs,' he said hastily. 'I refuse to talk about Mr. Norbery.'

'Excuse me, Sir. One moment! which you will not regret. You are his nephew, Sir, though that is not generally known. If I had known it, when he died, I should have stepped round in a friendly way to let you know. As it was, you didn't even follow

when he was buried, you've never claimed the property, though there was no will, and you were the heir-at-law.'

'I have nothing to do with Mr. Norbery, I tell you.'

'Why, Sir, really now—it's only a day or two since I found out that you were his nephew—surely you must have heard that he left no Will—that is to say, that he was thought to have left no Will—and that you were the heir to all of it.'

'I tell you again, Sir, that I have nothing to do with that man's money.'

'A quarter of a million if it is a penny. And yet you never claimed it. Never claimed it. Why there isn't another man in the world—never claimed it! And now the Queen's got it, that's all. I suppose you know that much.'

'Understand me, Sir,' Mr. Indagine rose, tall and commanding, his white locks flowing behind. 'Let there be no misunderstanding possible. Under no circumstances whatever could I step forward to claim that fortune. Never would I acknowledge myself to be the nephew of a man who caused my father—his own brother-in-law—to die in a debtors' prison.'

'Not even if a Will were found leaving it all to you?'

'Under no conceivable circumstances, Sir.'

'A quarter of a million!' Mr. Mayes repeated, feebly,

'I have spoken, Sir. This interview has lasted long enough. Good morning to you.' He turned away and sat down at his table. But Mr. Mayes lingered.

'One moment. Don't be in a hurry—no good to be in a hurry. You've got a daughter, Miss Althea Indagine——'

'What has my daughter got to do with you, Sir?' Mr. Indagine asked fiercely.

'If you will not be rich yourself, you would not mind her being rich, I suppose?'

'What do you mean by that?'

'Suppose, I say suppose'—here Mr. Mayes tapped his left forefinger with his right forefinger, as he had seen them do it on the stage of the Surrey. 'Suppose there was a Will found after all, and suppose your daughter was to benefit—largely, mind—enormously'—he spread out both his arms with untaught eloquence—'by that Will, you wouldn't—you couldn't—stand in her way.'

Mr. Indagine was not a man of the world, he had no recent knowledge of craft and subtlety, but these qualities were marked so strongly upon the man's face: they lay so open to view in his eyes: they were shown so clearly in his attitude—that a child would have understood them. He sat down and smiled and crossed his legs.

'So,' he said, 'it was not only in order to ask me why I do

not claim that fortune that you have come here. What have you to say more?'

'Why,' Mr. Mayes replied hoarsely, 'if such a Will was to be found, and I was to find it, what share should I get out of the proceeds? Mind—the man who found the Will?'

'What share?'

'What commission—if you like it better put that way? I should be content to take ten per cent.—a mere little ten per cent. in a Quarter of a Million—a flea-bite—you wouldn't so much as feel it—ten per cent.'

'Let us speak more plainly. Without any supposes, you mean to tell me that you have discovered a Will by which Mr. Norbery has left his fortune to my daughter. Very well, in the name of my daughter, I tell you that you may tear up that Will.'

'I only said—suppose.'

'And in the name of my daughter, I tell you that you will receive no commission of ten per cent., or anything else per cent.'

'Very well, gov'nor'—he replied, sullenly. 'When the commission is agreed to, and you've left off talking nonsense, we shall understand one another p'raps.'

'Sir——' Mr. Indagine began wrathfully.

'Stop a minute,' Mr. Mayes interrupted. 'Stop a minute. Don't say what you were going to say. It never does any good to get in a rage. Suppose you and the old man didn't quite hit it off. Bless your soul; I know the story of the Queen's Bench, and what the old man did. He was a hard nut to crack: he really was. But there is the young lady. You wouldn't die and have her poor, would you? From what I know of house property, Sir, speaking respectfully, I shouldn't say yours was worth much. She'll marry, perhaps. All the more reason——'

'She will continue in such a matter to be ruled by me.'

'And she may have children. Would you like to feel that your grandchildren were growing up paupers?'

'Sir,' Mr. Indagine rose and spoke with great dignity. 'One word. Understand me plainly. Never—never with my consent, shall a penny of Mr. Norbery's ill-gotten gains go to enrich my child or my possible grandchildren. Never shall my daughter, if such a Will exists, seek to benefit by it. Never, with my will.'

'It's awkward,' said Mr. Mayes. 'Well—I've said what I came to say. But the young lady's chap will have as big a say as you, Mister, come to her getting married. If you'd like to have another talk, you know where to find me. Successor to S. Norbery, your own uncle. In the old house.'

On leaving the house he did not return to his office but he walked across Southwark Bridge into the City, and directed his

steps towards the laboratory, where the most fortunate of all young fiancés was to be found in the morning.

He did not, as with Mr. Indagine, feel his way. The humblest money-lender would have a better knowledge of mankind. He exposed the whole case with a frankness worthy of the greatest statesman. He put the thing nakedly. *Do ut des*—he would have said, but he had not so much Latin.

'There,' he said, summing up. 'Now you know all, Mr. Luttrel. The Will is in my hands. Nobody knows about it, except myself.' This he said stoutly, such was his faith in the word of the Chevalier. 'And if you and me can't come to terms, nobody shall.'

'This is very amazing,' said Oliver. 'That Mr. Norbery should leave his property to me—unless—but the young lady is engaged to me. This is a most unexpected circumstance.' His cheek burned and he kept his eyes down and fumbled among the papers on the table. His hands trembled too; all those symptoms of agitation are common when one suddenly hears that one has inherited a large fortune. Every one of my readers will recognise the signs from personal experience.

'I am a man of business, Mr. Luttrel. That's what I am.'

'Surely, surely. But, about the Will. Is it not an extraordinary circumstance that it should have escaped notice until now? Are you quite sure—for instance—that it is a genuine document?'

'Well, I'll swear to the signatures if that is what you mean by genuine.'

'You remember, in fact, signing it?'

'Certainly. Why not? Why shouldn't I remember signing?'

'Why not, indeed?' Oliver looked up smiling softly. 'That settles the thing, even if the Will should be disputed—but if you remember, and since you've got nothing to gain by it——'

'Hold hard, there,' said Mr. Mayes.

'Very well, then, nothing under the provisions of the Will. Whatever private arrangements may be made. You are, therefore, an independent witness.'

'And the sole surviving Trustee.'

'Quite so—the Trustee. I suppose the management of the Estate would give you a vast deal of trouble.'

Mr. Mayes smiled.

'Well, Mr. Luttrel, don't let us beat about the bush. The young lady is engaged to you. If she marries you at once the money is hers—that is, it's yours—because the Married Woman's Property Act may say what it likes but it can't get rid of the

husband. If she doesn't marry you before the end of the year, the money is all yours.'

'Exactly. It is a situation—I confess—which is astounding. Still—the fortune will be as you say, mine, anyway—mine.'

'If I choose to let you have it,' said Mr. Mayes.

'Subject to that correction—no doubt.'

'You will give me an undertaking to make over to me ten per cent. of the whole fortune—whatever it is, as soon as you get it—either for yourself or your wife. Nothing before. I don't ask it. As soon as you get it.'

'Ye—yes,' said Oliver, with the air of one who considers only how to yield gracefully. 'It is a great slice out of the whole: but as otherwise we should get nothing and we are very poor—and—in short, Mr. Mayes, I agree. I will sign such an agreement as soon as you like. Nothing before the estate is mine, or my wife's. Ten per cent. afterwards.'

Mr. Mayes heaved a deep and heartfelt sigh. When the heart is touched such a sigh is very real.

'This will be a good day's work for both of us,' he said. 'When is it going to come off, Mr. Luttrel? When will the knot be tied?'

'The day is not yet fixed. I suppose in three or four months. There is no need to wait, but one must not hurry a young lady.'

'No, I wish it was to-morrow. I wish the bells of St. George's were ringing as they should for such an heiress and I could see you walking up the aisle with her in white.'

Oliver laughed.

'I wish I were taking that little promenade, Mr. Mayes, in such excellent company. However, it is all settled. Well, we may congratulate each other, I think.'

'We may. You will be a rich man and I shall be comfortable—very warm and comfortable. It's only common justice, too. I, who helped the old man to make his money, should, by rights, get some of it. It's only fair.'

'Quite fair, I think, quite fair. Meantime, for a man who is going to be so rich, I am ridiculously poor. You have already advanced me a little loan, Mr. Mayes—ten pounds, for which you are to get fifteen.'

'I'll lend you more,' he broke in eagerly, 'I'll lend you all you want—in reason—on the same terms. A young gentleman like you, with a quarter of a million coming in, ought not to be hard up for a pound or two.'

'Very well. Make it a hundred,' said Oliver. 'A hundred more on the same terms. Two hundred if you like. Three hundred, then,' he added, watching the money-lender's face.

Mr. Mayes laughed. This was business worth having. Better and better. Observe that an ordinary money-lender

would have hesitated. Young men die as well as old men: marriages are broken off: not even the husband has the disposition of his wife's money: the cup, full of sparkling wine, is sometimes dashed from the lips: nothing human is secure without security: this young gentleman offered no security. Yet where our hopes lie there we most easily deceive ourselves: Mr. Mayes saw his way so clearly to make this prodigious *coup* that he jumped at the smaller offer. There was this difference between Mr. Norbery and his successor, that the former never jumped.

'My dear sir,' he said, 'I have not the money myself,' his predecessor always used that formula. 'But I can get it for you. The want of a little ready money really must not stand in your way—three hundred I think you said. Come over to my place this evening and you shall receive and sign.'

'Harry,' said Oliver somewhat about midnight, 'is it safe? do you think it is quite safe?'

'My dear boy, it is absolutely safe. Borrow all you can get meantime, and we'll go halves. I'm only sorry—I really am—that we had the girl in it at all. Why didn't we put your name all alone? You've done pretty well, however. The girl don't like you. What does that matter if there's nobody else in the way? All the better, if she won't marry you. And I think, dear boy, that we really are going to have a fine old time.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLEET STREET REVISITED.

'But you promised to go back to the world,' Althea insisted, 'you promised Mr. Waller.'

'Yes, yes,' her father replied impatiently. 'But he was to go with me. That was understood. He was to take me. You forget, Althea, that my return to the old haunts may be awkward to many, and will certainly be an effort to myself. I shall want support. How do I know, for instance, what kind of reception I shall have? I left them amidst their gibes: I go back to them in the triumph of assured success—How will they receive that?'

'Well but, dear,' Althea laid her hands upon his shoulders. 'Consider, it is thirty years ago. You are not old, and you never shall be old, though your hair is white. But consider, thirty years ago. That is a long time. You were only a little over thirty, yourself. And—you have often told me so—you were one of the youngest men of the set.'

'Yes, they were mostly older than myself. I should like to see them all again—Yes, my dear, they were all older than myself. Dickens was forty-five: Thackeray was about the same age: John Oxenford, Charles Reade, who wrote, I remember, a charming book called "Peg Woffington," and was an Oxford man; John Forster, Dickens's friend; Shirley Brooks: Tom Taylor—they were all over forty. William Jerdan was over seventy and so was Leigh Hunt. Monckton Milnes—he was a Yorkshire country gentleman and one saw him seldom—was over fifty: so was Harrison Ainsworth: and Douglas Jerrold was fifty-two or more—I think I heard somewhere or somehow—that he died about that time.'

'Well, dear, but think. They must now all be over seventy, some of them even eighty. If they are living, they can hardly meet as they used to do when they were younger men. And many of them, in the nature of things, must be dead.'

'If they are dead they have left successors. The sacred lamp is always handed down.'

'But not the memory of injustice. Whose was the hand that wrote that cruel article upon your book?'

'I know not. That is, I suspect—I have always suspected. He used to sit in the corner, silent, and glowered with envious eyes. A small creature who had written poetry and failed.'

'Was it one of those whom you have mentioned?'

'Surely not, surely not. They were the leaders in the world of letters; they would scorn an anonymous attack—a stab in the back. Yet their tongues could be bitter.'

'Then, dear, why are you afraid to go among them?'

'You don't understand, Althea. I am not afraid—not the least afraid. Only I feel a little awkwardness about the position of these old friends when they see me back again.'

Althea held her father's works in the highest possible respect. But she could not believe that a single venomous attack upon them would be remembered after all these years.

'If I were you,' she said, 'I would go boldly back and take my place among them. They meet in taverns, do they not? A tavern is open to all the world.'

Her father shook his head. With the moral support of his young Australian friend he felt he would have gone anywhere—without him he was afraid. Call him not a coward. The men who sat at supper in the days when suppers were still ordered and eaten; the men of the pen, among whom were sometimes seen the leaders in the literary mill; habitually employed towards each other plainness of speech, frankness, freedom of expression, and, in fact, a license quite fraternal. Those who have read how Douglas Jerrold reduced his opponents to silence understand the colossal impudence which formed the staple wit

of these *réunions*. At no time did this poet, even when he was young and fiery, quite appreciate jokes made on his sacred calling. At the age of sixty and after his long seclusion he could not endure even to think of them.

'At what time do they assemble?' asked Althea.

'They generally dine at six, and they may be found at the "Cock," or the "Cheshire Cheese," or the "Rainbow," at any hour between then and midnight. Sometimes there are two or three only: sometimes there are a dozen.'

'Well, dear, let us go, you and I together, not to one of their meetings, but just to see the places where they meet. It was a promise of—of Mr. Waller's—to take me to many places. He has forgotten his promise,' she sighed. 'You and I will go together. First you shall show me your old haunts: that will be a beginning of your return to the world of letters: then we will go to the West End and see the world of fashion. Father, the past is done with. Mr. Waller has killed the past—for me as well as for you. We must make somehow—I know not how—a new beginning.'

Since the remarkable proofs of his great fame the poet had no other desire than to return to the world. Yet the thought had become a bugbear. How should he return? Whither should go? In which way should he begin? As for money, he had no anxieties. Another volume was nearly ready. Tom Moore got 5,000*l.* for 'Lalla Rookh'—why should not he get as much as Tom Moore? As in everything else, the first step was the trouble.

The time was come when he really must go back to the world. He said this to himself every day. Like all self-conscious men he thought a great deal about the world. It was the world which had driven him into exile: it was the world which he punished by his long silence: the world again, with tears of contrition, was now calling him back and crying for forgiveness: he was going to grant a general amnesty and to bestow upon the pardoned world the priceless gift of another volume. The world—it certainly is always too much with us—is an elastic phrase. It means those whose opinions we are likely to hear: it means either the joyful derision or the green envy of our enemies: either the compassion or the admiration of our friends. To Bismarck it means the whole mass—not so very great after all—of educated humanity: to a young poet it means the little circle of his own acquaintance. But, in his mind's eye that little circle swells and grows ever widening till it reaches the circumference of the round earth and is in diameter nothing less than the great Equator itself.

But the time had now come when he could no longer remain in obscurity. The world recalled him! The *Saturday Review*

asked who was Clement Indagine, where he lived and when he died: Fame was flying round the globe, was proclaiming his name and sounding his glory from far Cathay to Eldorado. It was maddening to sit in a corner hidden away and hear nothing of all this racket. Fame never hovers over Bank Side. Besides there is such a deafening noise from the hammer in the Works that one could not hear her trumpet even if it were a steam instrument, Fame's trumpet of the future.

'My dear,' he said fretfully, 'it is intolerable. They talk of me: they read me: they quote me: and I hear nothing of it at all. I might as well be as forgotten and neglected as I thought. What is the worth of success unless it becomes known?'

'Then, father,' said Althea, 'go back.'

But he hesitated. He was afraid.

As for himself, he knew that he was changed. Thirty years ago he resembled the portrait over the mantelshelf: perhaps not quite so gallant in his bearing: perhaps with not quite such an electric flash in his eye: but a proper young man, slim and tall with waving locks. He was changed, yet he could not choose but think that the other men remained untouched by Time as when he left them. This is our way. Twenty—thirty years pass, it is half a lifetime—nay, for those who work it is three-fourths of a lifetime: we meet again the young fellow from whom we parted laughing, where our ways diverged. Heavens! he is fifty: he is bald: he is fat: he laughs no longer: he has become stupid. We know that we ourselves have changed, but to think that others should have changed as well!

He consented at length, but with much misgiving, to the compromise proposed. He would go with Althea, and show her the old haunts. If not actually a return to the world, the thing would wear its semblance.

They started—one of them in nervous trepidation—on this eventful expedition, in the morning about noon, the weather being fine and the wind in the South. Bank Side presented no appearance of excitement or even of interest—probably because the papers had not announced the fact.

The Poet was dressed in his brown velvet jacket, now pretty old, and a broad felt hat; with these aids and his long white locks his make-up was picturesque. The girl with him in her light summer frock and hat, who looked as if she had just come up from the country, the air of which must have given her so sweet and fresh a colour, who walked with so firm a step and was so straight and tall, helped to make a striking group of two—Grandfather and Grandchild, no doubt, come up from the country to see the sights of London land.

From St. Paul's to the Tower, Althea knew the City: she knew the winding courts, the little dingy churchyards built

round by warehouses, their dead as clean forgotten and out of mind as any poor sailor wrapped in a hammock and dropped into the deep sea: the Churches, each one with its ancient history, hidden away among the back streets—but she knew the City of Sunday, or, at most, of Saturday afternoons. The City in full flow of business she knew not. West of St. Paul's she knew nothing. Fleet Street was in her mind the meeting-place of the poets: the Strand was a noble line of ancient palaces.

In any other place than the City of London, and at any other time than the hours of business, this pair would have been remarkable. At noon, however, there is no time to look at anything—unless it be a horse 'down,' which would draw the eyes of a financier about to net a million. The Emperor of China might walk along Cheapside, splendid in silk and umbrella: or Prince Bismarck, burly, trampling and shoving the lesser folk out of his way, like Pantagruel on his great mare; or the Pope of Rome with his beautiful triple crown; or even Helen of Troy, without exciting any attention, or causing any remark in the hours of business. In the evening, when the merchants are going to their railway stations, and the clerks are streaming homewards, it is different: then their minds are unoccupied, and their eyes are free to wander: then, a lovely shepherdess walking down Cheapside becomes aware of the great civic heart, how it beats; and of the great civic eyes, how they beam with admiration and praise of beauty.

'Where are we? What has been done here?' said the poet, looking at the great new street called after the Queen. 'I remember a labyrinth of narrow streets—I have wandered among them when I was a boy. Where are they?'

The traveller who returns to his native town after many years is either struck with the meanness and poverty of the place, or he laments the loss of the old houses, and the erection of the new staring mansions in their place. Mr. Indagine shook his head remembering what had been. Indeed there have been many losses of late years in the City between Mansion House and Blackfriars.

They stood at last on the steps of St. Paul's, and looked down upon the crowd of Ludgate Hill.

'Thus I stood,' said the Poet, 'more than thirty years ago. It was midnight, but the streets were crowded because the City was illuminated for the Peace. More than thirty years ago—I went home to my lodgings—they were in Featherstone Buildings, Holborn—and began the lines—you remember them, Althea—they are in my first style.

Upon the great Cathedral steps I stood
Alone amid the mighty throng—'

'I wonder the *Saturday Review* failed to remark those lines. To me they have always seemed to possess a certain delicacy of sentiment—eh?—a subtle fragrance—the thought is suggested—only those of like mind would catch it—there is a whisper in it—a murmur of midnight—something ethereal caught from the moon riding in the heavens and the jewelled sky.'

'I remember them very well,' said Althea. 'They are beautiful lines.'

'My dear,' he said, pressing her arm—'I have one reader at least who can see and feel the soul of the Poet. Look, what is that dreadful thing they have built across Ludgate Hill? Is it a gate—another gate of Lud, in place of the old one, but lower down?' At that moment a train rumbled slowly over the bridge. 'It is a railway bridge! Most horrible!' He belonged to the time when it was thought æsthetic to abuse the railway. They descended the steps.

'Let us pay a visit to the Row,' he said; 'it is long since my eyes were gladdened with the sight of the only trade worth attention.'

He led the way through a narrow passage into that remarkable thoroughfare known as Paternoster Row.

'Ha!' he said, looking round him with a sigh of satisfaction. 'This is the finest street in London. I think there cannot be a finer street in the whole world. The books come out of this street—the old books and the new books: the stream that never fails—my dear, I think now that I did wrong when I left the world to live on Bank Side with your uncle—I should have taken a lodging in Little Britain and walked every day in Paternoster Row.'

There were carts in the narrow old street blocking up the road in order to receive and discharge their parcels and bundles: boys carried books on their shoulders: porters wheeled barrows full of books: those who walked in the street seemed to have—but this may be mere fancy—a more thoughtful air—a nobler carriage than those who walked in Cheapside close by.

'I think I have never told you before, Althea,' said Mr. Indagine, looking wistfully up and down the street, 'that I began my active life here. If you write my biography, child, remember that when I left school at fourteen I was fortunate enough to get a place as junior clerk in Paternoster Row among the books which I loved even then—I left the Row when the little property fell in—all that was left—which my father's creditors could not seize—on which we have lived all these years. Perhaps I should have been a happier man now had I continued in the House—had I never wooed the Muse. I might have been long since the Head of a Department: a chief clerk: a principal Accountant: perhaps even a partner.'

So, after many years, when the man returned, the first thing he did was to visit the place where he had spent his youth. He always does it.

'The Chapter Coffee House was still standing in those days,' he said. 'Many a chop and cup of coffee have I had there. It ought never to have been closed. It was a national monument. But they shut it up before I went out of the world. Oh! The place is full of history: it is haunted by the poets of the last century. Here was the sign of the Ship and the Black Swan—see, the house still flourishes. And here was formerly the 'Bible and Crown,' but they have removed that westwards. The world of books! I used to come here every morning at nine: the evening I spent with my father in the Prison—in the Prison—' he paused a moment, 'in the Debtors' Prison,' he repeated with an effort. 'Well—let us forget that time. But the sight of Paternoster Row brings it back. Come, my dear. The years between were forgotten—I was a boy again, happy among the books all day, though I neither wrote them nor read them, and in the evening in the Prison—Come, dear, come.'

He was already changed. The memory of the past softened his face: he had lost his fretful look.

He led her down the Row to the end where wooden gates stood at the end of a broad court.

'My dear, it is Amen Corner,' he said. 'Let us look in. I remember coming here day after day, thinking how quiet and happy must be those who lived in this Cloister. To me whose childhood had been spent in a noisy Debtors' Prison, quiet seems the thing most to be desired.' He opened the gate and led the way into the place: there is a row of quiet-looking houses and then one turns into a broad court covered with ground ivy instead of grass, but with a few flower beds and trees and red-gabled buildings with an archway in red brick like a college.

'They have altered the buildings since my time,' he said, 'but they have not destroyed the quiet of the place. There is no other place like it in the City: not even Sion College, or Lord Derby's Palace, which they turned into the Heralds' College. My dear,' he said, 'it is so long since I remembered the old days—I came here for the quiet, to dream of being a Poet: I sat in the Chapter Coffee House my heart beating only to think that Goldsmith had sat there before me, perhaps on that very bench. And sometimes one saw an author—Alas! one can but once be young. Come, my dear.'

He led her into the narrow street and so to Ludgate Hill, where the stream of life runs up and down without cessation.

'Fleet Street at last!' he cried, lifting his head and looking

round him. 'We are in Fleet Street! It is too early yet for any of the poets and novelists: yet if we should happen upon any of them—but would they know me? And now my old friends must all be eighty years of age—eighty years of age!' he suddenly realised what this might mean. 'Oh, Althea! Can there be a circle of old, old men—eighty years of age? sitting and laughing as they used to sit and laugh over punch and port? No—no—it is impossible.' But he continued to look about him curiously as if it were quite on the cards that he might meet Dickens, Thackeray, and Douglas Jerrold marching arm in arm together, jovial and hearty still, though eighty years of age. 'My dear,' he said, 'this is a street of Taverns, all sacred to the memory of England's Worthies. There are the Cock, the Cheshire Cheese, the Rainbow, the Mitre, Dick's—once there was the Devil as well, but they pulled it down a hundred years ago. Cruel! To destroy the Apollo Chamber, the Kingdom of Ben Jonson! Here we dined and supped and drank and talked. Althea, I am glad we came—I am very glad we came.'

All day long Fleet Street is crowded, and during a good part of the night and very early in the morning it is astir. In the morning and in the evening there is the stream of City men: in the daytime are the journalists, the printers, the sporting men, and at the western end, the barristers. At the dinner-hour the printers stand about in crowds: during the afternoon the journalists appear: more men know each other in this, than in any other street of London: it is a clubbable and social street: more men are employed in this street and its courts than in any other: the great Dailies belong to this street: all the country papers have offices here: hundreds of organs, journals, trade circulars, magazines and sheets of all kinds, are published here and printed in the courts that lead out of it. These papers which are always coming out on their appointed day and being distributed with zeal, would by themselves keep the street lively without the aid of the printers. Fourteen thousand busy pens are flying over the paper all day long to supply these hungry sheets which go in white and come out black; and use up every day so many miles of written lines; and keep boiling such a host of deserving pots.

The returned exile looked about him curiously.

'It is more crowded than it was,' he said, 'and there are many changes in the houses. In my time there were none of these great buildings—I wonder if any of my old friends will recognise me, but in this crowd one passes undistinguished. And I see none like them.'

'But there is a terrible crowd,' said Althea. 'These people surely are not all poets and wits.'

'Hardly, my dear. Perhaps it is some special occasion. No,

they cannot certainly all be engaged in the pursuit of letters. Yet look, every house seems the office of some paper or magazine. Can the journals have multiplied?'

They were not exactly poets and wits—the gentlemen who crowded together on the pavements, smoking pipes, talking, laughing, or gathering round the sporting papers. They were, however, the gentlemen who print the glorious works of the poets and the wits: and it was their dinner hour, which explained the crowded condition of the street.

And then a very remarkable thing happened. No one could have expected it, and though the memory of it will always be a sweet morsel for the Poet, the adventure itself somewhat disconcerted him at the time. We are so seldom prepared for the unexpected.

They were moving slowly through the crowd, the Poet looking about him to remember the old places which have been so greatly altered in thirty years. The men on the pavement civilly made room for them as they passed and closed in behind them, talking quickly and with every sign of excitement and interest, but paying no attention to this pair, or to any other passengers who did not belong to themselves.

'Althea,' her father whispered with agitation, 'I am recognised! hush, make no sign, let us behave as if we had not heard.'

He raised his head and straightened his back and his face assumed all the solemnity of a conscientious mute.

And then Althea heard from a group on the other side of the street, this remarkable utterance—

'Three to two on the Poet!'

She looked round and observed that although they permitted themselves such freedom of speech concerning the Exile Returned, the speakers, who were common-looking men talking together with animation, had the politeness to refrain from gazing upon her father. And she marvelled greatly because—how should they know him? 'Three to two on the Poet!'—What could that mean? And yet not even to look after him!

At this point the crowd grew thicker, and as the idlers of the dinner-hour passed right and left to let them pass—this pair, so strangely unlike the current stream of Fleet Street people, they stared at them with wondering eyes.

'Althea,' the poet whispered, 'what do they mean? truly I cannot understand it—How should they know me? Should I take off my hat to them? They mean well. But let us take no notice—that is best. It is pleasant, however, to receive these marks of respect. They would speak to me if they dared. Perhaps if I were to shake hands with one of them—but no—no.'

He stopped at Bolt Court.

'Let us turn down here and escape our admirers,' he said. 'So—they do not come after us. That is polite of them. Do you know, my dear, that I have never before been followed and mobbed? It is a pleasant experience when one feels that it is deserved on the one hand and a sincere expression of admiration on the other. This is Bolt Court, Dr. Johnson lived here—that is the site of his house, it was burned about sixty years ago. And here—here—is the famous "Cheshire Cheese." I wonder if there are in it any—but it is too early. They would not begin to assemble before five at earliest. Upstairs there is a room where there has been despatched many a rump and dozen. Let us peep in.'

He pushed open the doors and looked in. A noisy group were gathered about the Bar drinking and talking. They stopped, astonished for a moment, at the sight of the old man and the girl; but only for a moment. Then they went on with their discussion, and one of them smote his left palm with his right fist, and cried aloud 'The Poet! The Poet for a pony!'

Mr. Indagine took off his felt hat and bowed low. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'the Poet thanks you,' and retired, leaving the little circle at the Bar in a condition of so much confusion that they were fain to finish their drinks and take one more. Some, indeed, could not get over the thing for the whole day and discussed it at the Bar until the utmost limit of time allowed by the law.

'These gentlemen,' said the cause of their surprise, returning to Fleet Street, 'must be some of the lesser lights. I fear that the habit of drinking, which formerly prevailed too much—I must own that—among the literary brotherhood, has not yet been abandoned. Poor Kit Marlowe lives again in every generation.'

He continued the walk, his chin in the air, his cheek flushed, his eyes bright. He had actually—a thing he had never expected—received public recognition in the open street! However, he continued as if nothing unusual had occurred, pointing out the glories of the street, which are mostly of convivial associations.

'The Mitre,' he said, 'is down that Court. It was Johnson's favourite tavern; that is Groom's, the old coffee-house—many a cup of coffee have I had at Groom's. Next to it is the Rainbow, one of the oldest houses in London. Their port used to be worth something—I wonder if there is any of the old stuff left. Dick's is hidden away in that Court opposite: we used to dine at Dick's a good deal: they charged you eighteenpence, I remember, and you helped yourself off the joint. And here—

here—where is it? I can't see it anywhere—can we have passed it?'

'What is it?'

'The Cock, my dear. The most famous tavern of all. Where can it be?'

He retraced his steps to look for it. Alas! The Cock was gone.

'My dear,' he said, 'I fear that there have been more changes than I thought. If the Cock has gone, whither do the wits resort? Good Heavens! The Tavern sung by Tennyson! It should be as famous as the Mermaid, or the Devil. Everybody went to the Cock. Every night there was a gathering from dinner at five or six, to supper after the theatre. Where do they go now?'

A boy ran past them with an armful of papers, shouting, 'The Great Fight! Winner! Winner! Winner!'

The people snatching and eagerly tearing them open. And as they read there was a confused murmur—'The Poet! The Poet! The Poet!' And some shouted 'Hooray! The Poet wins!'

'Let us go, Althea,' said the Bard hastily. 'This demonstration is too much.' He took off his hat and walked bareheaded with humid eyes and flushed cheeks, bowing to right and left along the crowd which made way for him. Strange to say, they hardly looked at him. But they murmured or they shouted: they laughed or they groaned: they danced or they hung their heads, and they said, sung, shouted, and whispered, 'The Poet! The Poet wins! The Poet!'

'Why?' asked Althea in the evening—'why did they say, "Three to two on the Poet"?'

'I hardly know, my dear. No doubt you observed that they were mostly people of little culture—it is some street expression, meaning applause or admiration. I remember there was generally some popular cry, the utterance of which was accepted in place of wit. Such, for instance, as "Who's your hatter?" "All round my hat," "Proceed, Edward," "Jump Jim Crow" or "Pop goes the weasel," "Not for Joe," with others more meaningless still. My dear, in the vulgar speech these phrases mean nothing. It is sufficient for us that they have recognised me and paid me a spontaneous and hearty tribute of admiration. I shall make a poem on this day, I shall call it "Fleet Street revisited." The world shall rejoice at this accidental outburst of gratitude and—and—and love—yes—my dear, love. It is nothing short of love—and the love of mankind is the Poet's truest crown of glory.'

Strange to say, though the people shouted, they never looked at him. When Althea afterwards remembered this demon-

stration, it became like some nightmare, to think of those eyes which saw not, those faces which showed not the least interest in her father, while they cried aloud, 'The Poet! The Poet!' And not one or two here and there: not a shout in one corner and another further on: but a continual roar of voices. Some shouted and some growled: some laughed and some groaned: some danced and some hung their heads: some shook hands and some plunged their hands in their pockets. But all of them—all this great crowd that filled Fleet Street from end to end cried, shouted, or growled in every variety of voice and expression, 'The Poet! The Poet! The Poet!'

At Chancery Lane they were clear of the mob and Mr. Indagine put on his hat again. But still they were pursued by the cry, though it grew fainter and came not west of the Griffin. Indeed along the Strand, as the object of this enthusiasm afterwards remarked, they might have been quite common people, for all the notice that was taken of them.

CHAPTER XIX.

IS IT NOT TRUE?

THE single fact that these events seemed of sufficient importance to draw Claudia out of her seclusion is in itself justification for the writing of the whole history. It is what very thoughtful Americans call pivotal, a word so truly beautiful that it should be kept on a shelf to be looked at, like the family punchbowl. Great and important, indeed, must be that mundane event which could call Claudia from her retirement.

A Prophetess must necessarily remain in seclusion. The Pythian, who only exercised her functions for one month in the year, remained during the other eleven in strict retirement. If she went out at all it was in a litter borne by spinsters young and old, every one of whom hoped to succeed when their turn should arrive at—say seventy-two or so—to the honour of the three-legged stool. Before the litter marched two by two the six priests, all in white surplices, bawling 'Room for the Lady Pythia!' In the litter lay a veiled figure. But no one saw her face. So the Prophetess of the Early Church stayed at home, invisible, retired. Sometimes in the summer she went forth to take the air in a carriage, veiled, and attended by her niece Flavia. Except by her congregation she was seen by none.

Yet she came forth one morning, walking, actually walking, as if she had been any ordinary mortal, to call upon Althea. And no one in the street took the least notice of her. That was

perhaps because the members of her own congregation were all engaged in their work: but in these days when nuns, and sisters, and nurses, and Salvation Majors all jostle on the pavement, dressed some in black with white starched caps broad or narrow, and some in light blue frocks and poke bonnets and coal-scuttles, admiration is no longer evoked at the sight of a little lady in black silks even in the most unenlightened slum.

The street door of the Doctor's house stood open all day long, for professional reasons. Therefore there was no necessity for ringing, and the visitor opening one of the side doors at hazard discovered Althea alone meditating over her work.

'May I come in?' she asked. 'My name is Claudia Laverock.'

'Oh!' Althea sprang to her feet. 'Aunt Claudia!'

'If you please,' the lady replied smiling. 'If you are Althea, as I suppose, I will be your aunt, or your mother, or your sister, or anything you please.' She was dressed in her black silk, with a black lace mantle and black silk gloves: she wore a heavy gold chain round her neck at the end of which was a gold cross: and she looked exactly like an Abbess of a Royal cloister, French or Spanish, reserved for ugly princesses, deformed duchesses, and reduced gentlewomen who could show sixteen quarterings at least: or perhaps like a chanoinesse living in the world and yet not quite belonging to the world, such was the dignity of her carriage. In person she was slight, but no one would call her insignificant: dignity, especially in women, has nothing to do with stature: her eyes were curiously keen and yet they were kindly eyes: Althea, who had never seen her before, began instantly to compare her with her sister Cornelia as one might compare Cassie, pretty, soft and winning, with Flavia prim and demure. There were the same points of likeness and of unlikeness. She had a singularly soft and musical voice: observing the music of her voice, the sweetness of her smile, and the kindliness of her eyes one understood her power of attraction. Perhaps it was this power as much as the Prophetic gift which made the Connection believe in her so implicitly.

She closed the door and advanced with both hands outstretched.

'You are Althea,' she repeated. 'I have heard of you, my dear, for many years, since you were a little girl, since the time when my husband died and I came back to my own people—who would have none of me—to preach and prophesy. I have heard of you, but I have never seen you, because I cannot walk up and down the streets like any other woman. I live secluded, save when I am in the Chapel. Flavia comes there every Sunday evening to see me and to hear me. But I have never seen you. Oh! I press no one. Where the Truth is proclaimed, thither

should flock all those who love the Truth. No, no, I do not press you—I did not come to speak about the Connection, and no doubt my sister Cornelia has prejudiced your mind. Once a person enters the Established Church, you know, she naturally becomes loth to acknowledge Truth——'

'I am sure——' Althea began to protest.

'No, my dear, do not go on. I am not here to speak about the Chapel. It is for quite other things—temporal concerns—earthly interests—that I have come.'

'I am sure it is out of kindness,' said Althea.

'Oh! are you quite sure of that?' the Prophetess murmured very sweetly. 'That was very prettily said, my dear. Let me look at you. Yes—you are a very beautiful girl, and if your eyes tell the truth and Flavia and Felix are not deceived, you are quite as good as you are beautiful. All goodness, all loveliness, I would draw within my chapel walls. You are tall and beautiful—you take after your father, who was also tall and handsome. I will sit down, my dear, if you will allow me, because I have got a good deal to say.'

She took a chair, spreading her ample robes as if the chair were a throne. More than her share of the family dignity had fallen to her, yet with queenly graciousness.

'My child,' she said, 'a Thing has been laid upon me. For the most part my mind is fully occupied in spiritual meditations and in prayer. We pray without ceasing, who are the Brotherhood of Early Christians. Yet a Thing wholly temporal has been laid upon me. I say not what that is, and you must not ask me.'

'If it does not concern me,' said Althea, 'why should I seek to know?'

'It may concern you. My dear, suppose it does concern you. I, who never visit even my own people, and see none but the faithful who come to me, have come to see you. Out of kindness—yes, you were right. I would not willingly do anything that might wound the daughter of Clement Indagine or the dear friend of my niece Flavia and of my son Felix. But I must talk to you first, and perhaps I may have to say things that seem cruel.'

'I am sure you cannot say cruel things.'

'I am supposed by my people,' said the Prophetess, 'to know everything. I do not try to deceive them, but they willingly believe that. Truly I know very little. I am a servant who speaks what is put into her heart, and does what is laid ready for her hands; these things I may not refuse.' She hesitated. 'My poor child, if I could spare you——'

'What is it?' asked Althea, beginning to be alarmed.

'My dear,' said the Prophetess, taking the girl's hand, 'I am going to ask you a question which only an old and close friend

has the right to ask. I am a stranger, but you know me. Believe me, it is from no idle curiosity. It is a very important question, and I cannot tell you, to-day, where the importance lies. Will you trust me, then, and give me an answer?'

'You are no stranger,' Althea said. 'I know you already through Cassie and Flavia. I will tell you anything you wish.'

'There is a young man named Oliver Luttrel, the adopted son of Dr. Luttrel'—Althea blushed—'to whom you are engaged.'

No, no,' said Althea, 'I am not engaged to him.'

Not engaged to him?'

No, I am not. And I never shall be.'

Oh!' The Sybil looked puzzled. 'Then why did Mr. Waller tell my niece Cassandra that you were engaged to him?'

'He was mistaken,' Althea replied, with some show of confusion.

'Yet that was the reason he went away. You know that, my dear, do you not?'

'I—believe so,' Althea replied.

'And if he knew that he was perhaps—mistaken, he might come back—is it not so?'

Althea made no reply to this at all.

'Well, but, my dear, Flavia went yesterday evening to see the young man at his Laboratory. She went to reproach him; and he laughed at her, and said he was going to marry you in three months' time.'

'He is very greatly mistaken,' said Althea quickly. 'Oh! but he has no right at all. I will tell you exactly what has happened. It is two months or so since he began to pretend that he was in love with me—in order to please my father and my uncle I told him—what any girl might have said—that if I could think of him at any time that way, I would become engaged to him. But nothing has been said since—he has not even been here—and now I know that it is impossible. Quite—quite impossible.'

'Would nothing make you change your mind?'

'Nothing.'

'Could you not by trying, still in order to please your father, bring yourself to love him?'

'No—never.'

'Suppose he were to come to you bearing a great fortune in his hands, would not that——'

'Oh! a fortune! How would that help me? But it is quite impossible—I could never even think of him in that way.'

'You were brought up together, in this house. Does not the recollection of that time soften your heart towards him?'

'Oliver is my brother, I must always be interested in him:

nothing that he can say or do is indifferent to us here. But he will never be anything more to me.'

The Prophetess seemed gratified by this news. She smiled gravely and nodded her head. Then she took Althea's hand once more in her's and gently patted and pressed it. She was a very sympathetic Prophetess.

'My dear,' she said, 'better to be a lonely woman all your life than to marry a man whom you have never loved. But you will not remain lonely. That is not your fate. Well, my dear, you are free, and what I thought would be a painful task is spared me.'

'I do not understand.'

'No: there are some things better not understood until the time comes,' she replied darkly. 'In earthly concerns as in spiritual there are times of fulfilment when the wicked are overtaken and the saints are released from the oppressor and the cry of the poor is heard. Rest assured, child, that no harm will come to you.'

She rose as if to go, but first she looked round the room. Her eyes fell upon the portrait of the poet hanging over the mantelshelf.

'Oh,' she said, 'that is your father. I suppose he is changed. But I remember him like this thirty years ago and more, when I was a schoolgirl. Yes, he used to come over to see his brother Æneas, your uncle. Æneas was a harum-scarum fellow and he got into debt and ran away, and I never heard what became of him. We girls used to look after Clement and whisper each other what a lovely young man he was. After my sister died I heard more about the two brothers. They were the sons of a poor gentleman who died in the Queen's Bench—he was kept there by Mr. Norbery himself—his own brother-in-law, though that I did not learn till afterwards. Oh! he was a hard man. Clement would never so much as speak of his uncle, Lucy told me.'

'Who was Lucy?'

'Have you never heard of Lucy?' Mrs. Laverock laughed a little. 'Oh! but you ought to know about Lucy, because I think before long you will be very much interested in her. Lucy was my cousin, and when my sister died she became housekeeper to Mr. Norbery, then she got married and went away to Australia. Such a bright clever girl she was—not so pretty as her sister Florry—poor Florry! poor thing—but cheerful and happy. Oh! the old times—I often wonder, my dear, if they ever really existed—if I was ever really young and pretty. Oh! how happy it must be to be young and pretty!' The Prophetess at this point became perfectly human and womanly. 'Sometimes it seems to me as if the only happiness in life is to

be young and beautiful. But these two girls, my cousins, were terribly poor, and we were unable to do much for them—and Florry went away—she had better have stayed with her sister. Poor Florry! she was my favourite, but my sister Julia loved Lucy. The old days! the old days! My dear,' she sat down again, 'you will hear a great deal more about Lucy, I promise you.' Again she laughed and nodded her head.

'Shall I?' Althea replied with indifference. The name of Lucy did not attract her.

'I must go away I suppose.' But she did not get up. 'My dear, you can come to see me if you like—not at the Chapel but at home. Come in the afternoon when I have tea. In the evening I am always with my people and in the morning I am alone—with my soul.'

'I will come, thank you.'

'I hear about you from Flavia and from Felix—my son Felix—' she added the last words with a little softening of the voice. 'My son is a good boy, though as yet the Early Church has not been able to number him among the fold. He thinks more about his old friends of the Poly. But he is a good boy, and just now he is unhappy.'

'Are we all unhappy?' asked Althea.

'He is unhappy on account of his cousin Cassie. Young men are so silly about girls. And Cassie is crying her eyes out, he says, for this other young man—this wicked young man, Oliver, who has jilted her.'

'Oh, no,' Althea cried. 'That cannot be. Why, Cassie herself told me over and over again—and Oliver assured me—that there never was anything between them.'

'My dear, girls are proud about these things. Cassie said that which was not true. And the young man cruelly laughs at her.'

'Oh! is it possible?'

'Everything is possible with those who belong to the world. But the young man shall be punished.' Her face hardened for a moment as she pronounced this judgment. 'My boy—my son Felix—' again she became perfectly human and womanly. 'My Felix—is he not a great strong man? But he takes after his father—is foolish about Cassie. They are the same age and he loves her—at least he says so—men are always foolish about girls, you know—and he is mad about it. My dear Felix wanted to go and horsewhip this young man. But we have dissuaded him because there is a more certain way. I came here fearing that to punish Oliver would be to humiliate you. But that is not so.'

'I would rather that he was forgiven or left to himself.'

'He must be punished, and that in such a way as to tear the

last illusions from Cassie's eyes and to show him such as he is. Leave this man to me, Althea.' She was again the Prophetess. 'The wicked dig pits for others and fall therein themselves. They set nets and are caught in them. Leave him to me.' With these words, which left behind them a prophetic foreboding of wrath to fall upon the head of the guilty, she rose once more to go.

'My dear,' she said, stopping again, 'I have seen Mr. Waller. He came to my Chapel with Flavia. He is a tall and handsome young man. He went away because he thought you were engaged to another man, did he not?' She again pressed Althea's hands in her own with warm and sympathetic grasp. 'Oh! because he loves you so much that he cannot bear to think that you belong to another man——'

'Oh! please—please say no more. He is gone.'

'He would come back again if he thought—he would fly back on the wings of the wind if he knew. Shall he come back, my dear? Oh! shall he—shall he come back to you, my dear—my dear? Shall we bring him back?'

She purred and murmured and whispered these words so full of consolation and of hope, with voice so soft and melodious, with smile so sweet, with eyes so gracious and affectionate that the girl's heart glowed within her. Then without any other force than the mesmeric power of sympathy and love, she drew—this little dainty Prophetess drew down to her own level the girl's tall head and kissed her, as with a benediction, on the forehead.

Then she went away leaving behind her such a glow and warmth of hope and happiness as might have reminded Althea of the day when she floated down the river of molten gold in a purple cloud to meet the man who was come all the way from the Antipodes to be her lover.

Was there ever such a Prophetess? Yet how could she bring him back? Other Prophets have had their gifts. The Lady Pythia, for a thousand years; Nostradamus; the Red-faced Nixon; Doctor Francis Moore; Mother Shipton—they could all foretell the future—especially if there was anything nasty in it, as mostly there is. But could any of them—could any Prophet ever known—except Claudia—bring a straying lover back to the arms of his mistress?

CHAPTER XX.

THE FUGITIVE RETURNS.

It was a wet evening in August, when the summer appeared to have suddenly taken to itself wings and fled away to some more happy isle. The evening was still young, and broad daylight, with clouds driving across a grey, not a blue sky, and rain lashing and pelting the black face of the river made Bank Side look miserable indeed. On such an evening Father Thames scowls and threatens: he who creeps forth to the nearest Bridge resolved to jump over and have done with it sees below him an angry flood which promises to roll him over and over and to keep the life long in him while it dashes him to and fro, breaking arms and legs against the sides of barges and prolonging the horror of death out of mere bad temper and malignity. The prospect affrights the poor wretch and he shrinks back and goes home again resolved to bear a little longer—at least till better weather—the misfortunes which beset him: one would not willingly have one's last impressions of the world set in so gloomy a frame: if we must depart without leave, uncalled and uninvited, even against orders, let us have the stars twinkling over us and the moon riding in splendour to redeem the horror of the final jump. On such a night, to the residents on Bank Side the wooden wall looks mean and the barges squalid: the piles of rusty chain and scrap iron fill the soul with sadness: it is as if life were henceforth to be spent among the shucks and shards, the duds and rags, the broken bits, the scraps, and the used-up things of life, as if one was condemned to become a Lazarus sitting outside the back gate of the mansion, in the place where they shoot their rubbish, not in the street, or on the doorstep within view and within reach of any Lord Dives and his friends. There arises before the mind an image as of Marine Stores. One looks around for the Black Doll. One feels the actual Proprietorship of a Rag and Bone Emporium.

Such an evening is especially depressing on a summer evening when it is still light and one cannot draw the curtains, make up the fire and sit round it. To be cold and comfortless in August is a kind of robbery. It is everywhere mournful; but there are some houses in which it is maddening—those, namely, in which the good old rule is maintained which allows no fire from the first of May to the end of October, rage the weather ever so Arctically. Cornelia maintained that rule.

Therefore, Cassie would have shivered and Sempronius would have crammed his hands in his pockets had the times been at their happiest. But it was more than the depression caused by slighted Sirius which covered, this evening, the faces of all with a cloud of the blackest gloom and despondency. Dejection was written on all their faces, except perhaps on that of the boy, who had a book and was far away from Bank Side—on the broad Pacific Ocean in fact, and in very bad company—pirates, indeed, flying the Jolly Roger, snapping up Spaniards and merrily making them walk the plank.

It was the presence of disaster. A fortnight ago it was threatened. Now it was upon them and the outlook was charged with blackness.

'Children,' said the Head of the House, striking his right hand into his waistcoat—it is always a dignified action, though of late, since the suppression of the laced ruffle, it has lost much of its effectiveness. 'Children, I begin to think that I am—ha, ha!—antiquated—actually antiquated. An experience with the procedure of the Courts and Chamber practice extending over thirty years has left your father, I believe—antiquated—I am no longer wanted.' Flavia looked up and murmured disbelief. 'Yes—that appears to be the case—I am no longer wanted. I suppose that even if Mr. Polter, Q.C., were himself to return he would be no longer wanted. Services such as I can render—I used to think they were such as few can render—are no longer appreciated. They now require, I am told, a young man who will bring business—bring—bring——' he repeated with sarcasm, 'will bring business. They want a man who knows solicitors' clerks. That is the new way of things. Formerly—must I say in my time?—we received business. What would Mr. Polter have said to me had I proposed to bring him business? We received it: we conferred an obligation on those who brought it—merely by receiving it. And we—the men of our position in the Higher Branch did not know—we would not know—Solicitors' clerks.'

'Have you found anything, Cassie?' Flavia whispered.

Cassie shook her head.

'I can never forget,' continued their father, 'the dignity with which Mr. Polter, Q.C., received a brief. Some of his manner, I have been told, fell upon myself. Am I lost to the Higher Branch? It would seem so. After a man has been upon the Higher Branch of what use is he elsewhere? The machinery of the Law—the practice at Court and in Chambers, the endorsement of the Briefs—the conduct of the barrister's business—these are intricacies which I have at my finger ends.'

'I have tried everywhere,' whispered Cassie. 'There seems nothing to be got.'

'What else do I know? Apart from a liberal education and whatever the use of an extensive library has given to me—nothing. Can I make a boot? Can I sell a yard of calico? There is no opening for one who has served for thirty years in the society of barristers and gentlemen—in the Higher Branch.'

'There's heaps of girls,' Cassie continued in a low voice, 'who will take anything—anything—girls who have been taught things and can write French and German. I know nothing.'

'Children, since all industry is honourable you will not be ashamed of your father should you see him steering a wheelbarrow on a plank between Bank and barge. I have still my hands and my legs—' he extended one; it was both short and thin. 'I believe that half-a-crown a day can be earned upon the plank.'

Sempronius, bending over his book in his customary corner, looked up and choked. Then he blushed guiltily, and again he choked. He belonged to the large but unhappy class of boys who are seized at the wrong moment with an overpowering desire to laugh. I know one poor man who would certainly have made an excellent Bishop—he actually wanted to be a Bishop—but is now nothing but a story-teller because he could not choose but laugh whenever the desire seized him. He has been known to disgrace a funeral by untimely mirth. And he was forced to renounce an ecclesiastical career from the dread, nay, the certainty, that something would some day occur to him which would make him laugh in the pulpit. Sempronius is perhaps destined to furnish another illustration of this unfortunate weakness. The picture of his parent in black trousers, frock coat, and a tall hat walking up and down a plank behind a wheelbarrow was too much, and he stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth—the only counter-irritant yet discovered.

'Nature,' continued his father with severity, 'as you will find admirably put in your grandfather's work, Sempronius, compels us to eat: this is the Universal Law. If we would eat we must work. Another Universal Law. Again, work must be honest. This is a moral Law. Therefore all honest work must be honourable. If it is no longer possible for me to remain in the Higher Branch I shall cheerfully accept whatever else may offer, even if it be the handle of the wheelbarrow.'

'Nobody wants girls,' Cassie continued, gloomily.

'Patience,' said her sister. 'Something will turn up.'

They relapsed into gloomy silence. Things apparently were at their blackest. At this point, they always mend. Unfortunately, long after they have seemed as black as Erebus, they sometimes grow blacker still, incredibly black. In this case they might certainly have grown much worse. The family still had a

house over their heads: Cornelia had her salary and Flavia hers —at the worst it would be a tight fit for a while. But a tight fit continued a little too long may mean a drop in gentility afterwards irrecoverable. What, for instance, would be life to a young lady in the Telegraph Department without gloves?

'Last night,' said Cornelia, breaking silence, 'I heard the ringing of bells and dreamed of cracking nuts. If I know anything, this means good fortune.'

'Well,' said Flavia, 'if we can't get good fortune, I suppose there's some consolation in dreaming about it. Let us all wish. Father, I wish you a better Guarantee—Cassie, I wish you better luck, and more cheerful looks—and I wish—I wish—yes, I think the very best thing that could happen for all of us would be for Mr. Waller to come back again.'

What followed is almost incredible.

For, at that very moment, when the words were yet vibrating in the air, a Hansom cab drove along Bank Side from the Blackfriars end. A Hansom cab on Bank Side—except sometimes in business hours—is indeed an unusual thing to see. This cab drew up at their door, and none other than Mr. Waller himself, portmanteau, sticks and umbrella, hat-box and bundle of rugs, jumped out.

'Oh! good gracious!' cried Flavia. 'Why—here he is! He's actually come! Just as we were wishing for him! Oh! let's run to meet him!'

Yes, he was among them again. He was shaking hands with everybody, especially with the girls: he was pulling Sempronius by the ear: he was hearing the news: he was listening to Lucius discoursing upon the withdrawal of the Guarantee and to Flavia over Cassie's loss of place. He was running upstairs with his things and down again. And all their hearts were lifted and all their eyes were bright. What he was going to do no one knew. But that something would be done now he was come was certain.

'Mr. Waller,' said Flavia, a horrid thought piercing her like a knife. 'Are you only come to say good-bye before you go back to Australia?'

'No—if I may stay—if I may have the Best Bedroom again —thank you—I should like to make a little longer visit than a day or two, you good kind people.' He held out one hand to Aunt Cornelia, who had been the first to nod at the mention of the Best Bedroom, and the other to Cassie. 'I have been thinking about you ever since I went away. I have been to the Lakes and about—here and there—and always my thoughts came back to Bank Side.'

'That,' said Flavia, 'we can very well understand.'

'There were things I had left unfinished, and things I wanted

to see worked out. And so—and so—I have come back, you see.'

'Oh, it's wonderful,' said Flavia.

Just for a further proof of the miraculous nature of his return, the rain left off suddenly: the clouds blew away: the smiling sun shone out: clear and high against the blue sky showed the great dome of Paul's, and the river sparkled and danced.

'It's wonderful,' Flavia repeated. 'Aunt Cornelia, I do believe it's your dream of the ringing bells.'

If he had gone away melancholy he came back lively. He was in the best of spirits—he laughed all over—he made them feel, instantly, what a desperately foolish thing it was to repine over being out of work. Everything was easy—everything would turn out well: the world was the best of all possible worlds.

'Come outside, Cassie,' he said presently, 'come out, Flavia. Let us go and look at the barges.'

'It was here,' he said, when they stood above the Bank Side stairs, 'that you and Althea came out of the sunset, Cass. You remember?'

'Yes, I remember.'

'Oliver met you and carried the oars home for you. You remember, Cassie?'

'Yes, I remember.'

'Cassie,' he said—he had taken her hand and held it—'you made a terrible mistake: you will get over it—I am certain you will get over it. And I made another.'

'What was yours?'

'I told you that—that—Althea was engaged to him.'

'Well?' cried Flavia.

'Well——' he laughed. 'You know he isn't.'

'Oliver says he is.'

'He may say what he pleases. He is not.'

'How do you know it, Mr. Waller?'

'A bird in the air sang it to me: the wind on the hillside above Rydal Water whispered it in my ears: a voice came to me in the night.'

'So you have come back,' said Flavia, gravely.

. . . . . .

'Lucius,' said Cornelia, 'remember what I told you before. This talk about Sir David Waller is all rubbish and nonsense. That young man is Cousin Lucy's son. I do not know how he came by his money and his fine clothes. Let us hope, honestly.'

'I should indeed hope so. But, Sister——'

'Lucy's son, I tell you. After such behaviour as Lucy's to me, which I shall never forget, there are few women who would forgive her. But I do,' she added with the sniff of forgiveness. 'And I will not visit her sins upon her son. But I should like

to get to the bottom of this, brother, and now that he has come back to us, I shall try to find it out. Lucy's son—oh! her face, her eyes, her voice, her very way of laughing. They were a pretty pair of sisters, those two; and him to come masquerading as the son of a great man! Well, I'm glad he's come back, but I mean to find out what it means. Lucy's own son!'

CHAPTER XXI.

A MORNING ON DUTY.

My dear young friend!' Mr. Indagine jumped out of his chair and welcomed him with both hands and a sudden sunlight in his eyes. 'You have come back to us! I thought you would never come back. Althea—my child—' he raised his voice so as to be heard in the other room. 'Come quickly. Come to welcome Mr. Waller.'

Althea obeyed. She came in with a blush upon her cheek and gave Laurence her hand with downcast eyes. This wonderful Prophetess! Then she took refuge behind her father.

'You are welcome indeed,' he repeated with a deep sigh. 'Oh! If you only knew how greatly we have missed you!'

'It was impossible to stay away, you see,' Laurence replied, looking, perhaps by accident, at Althea. 'I was obliged to come back.'

'Obliged to come back,' the Poet echoed, with satisfaction unbounded. 'Nay—nay—you overestimate the society of a poet. But you are privileged—in this house you can say anything you please. Sit down—I have quantities of things to say. Sit down—sit down.'

He pushed his young friend into the easy chair and went on talking.

'Well—it is a real pleasure to have you back again. You look better, too. That last day you were here—I remember—you looked unhappy. Something had gone wrong.'

'Yes,' Laurence replied. 'Something had gone very wrong indeed. But I have come back'—this time he was careful not to look at Althea—'with hope renewed.'

'That is very good hearing. Well—you shall hear what has happened to me. First of all, I have carried out my promise. I have returned to the world. Only once, as yet, it is true, but it has been enough to prove the reality and to gauge the depth of that fame which you, my friend, were the first to reveal to me.'

'Indeed?' asked Laurence, a shade of anxiety falling upon his face. 'How was that?'

'When I think of it, I am really astonished. Even the most sanguine of men could not expect such a thing. And after thirty years to be actually recognised!'

'What did happen?'

'What should you think of a Popular Reception?'

'What?' Laurence started and sat upright.

'Of an Ovation—a Public Triumphal March?'

'An ovation?'

'Nothing less, my young friend, I assure you. Nothing less. And of the most amazing character.'

'Really?' This was indeed bewildering. This impostor—who had himself counterfeited the Voice of Fame, felt as if the earth was going round under his feet. 'A Triumphal March?'

'You shall hear. We took a walk—Althea was with me—through the City. After lingering a little in Paternoster Row we walked down Ludgate Hill and through Fleet Street. To be sure my appearance was quite public: there was no attempt at concealment: we walked openly and it was mid-day—I was looking about me, pointing out to Althea some of the old places and their literary associations and marking the changes that have been made in the street. It was quite full of people—men—congregated on the pavement and talking—when suddenly, to my intense surprise, I found that I was actually recognised!'

'Recognised!' Laurence grasped the arm of the chair to steady himself. 'Who recognised you? One of your old friends?'

'No—no—I met none of my old friends. I wish now that they had all been present—my lukewarm friends with my enemies, to see and hear. I was recognised—I confess that it is most astonishing—I was suddenly and universally recognised—I cannot imagine how my face came to be known to them—by the assembled multitude——'

'Good Heavens!' In a moment—in the twinkling of an eye—there glanced through the mind of this conscience-stricken deceiver a dramatic possibility, how the thing that he had invented only to please Althea might actually, without his own knowledge, have really taken place—that the Poet's reputation had actually grown during these thirty years as he had deceitfully fabled and represented so that he was in sober reality famous. If so——

'The street,' Mr. Indagine went on, 'was, I say, crowded with people. In the old days it was never so full. None of them seemed to resemble the men who used to frequent Fleet Street and sit in the Taverns. It was a crowd which a man might set down as comparatively humble. Yet their faces were

intelligent and they were greatly animated and they knew me, one and all.'

'Good Heavens!' cried Laurence—'this is wonderful.'

'Is it not? Suddenly some one cried out my name—the word flew from mouth to mouth—we were mobbed, though respectfully—even reverentially.'

'Your name—did they cry out "Mr. Clement Indagine"?'

'No. They cried out "The Poet! There is the Poet!" or "Look at the Poet," or words to that effect. It really was, and will ever remain, the proudest moment of my life. It was nothing short of an ovation that they gave me—nothing less, as I said, than a Triumphal March that we made.'

Laurence turned with amazement to Althea.

'I cannot tell,' she said, 'how the people came to know who he was. There were great crowds standing about, and they kept crying "The Poet! the Poet! Three to two upon the Poet!" It was wonderful. And yet they seemed not to be looking at him.'

'Among the people,' said the Poet, 'in places when you would least expect it, there is a natural delicacy of feeling which is very pleasant to experience. They knew, of course, how distasteful it would have been to have all eyes turned upon me. Therefore they averted their heads, though they could not restrain their feelings. I respect them all the more.'

'Three to two upon the Poet,' Laurence repeated. Then he suddenly laughed and as suddenly became solemn again. 'Why,' he said, 'it must have been most surprising, and—and—as you say, truly gratifying.' Then his lips parted again as one who wished to laugh, and his eyes twinkled as one who laughed inwardly, and once more he hardened his face and became as solemn as a clown at a christening.

'Stay with me this morning,' said the Poet. 'I have a great deal more to tell you. Althea, my dear, will you leave us alone?'

'Oh!' the young man's face lengthened. 'I was—I was in hopes,' he said, 'that Miss Indagine would take me on the river this morning.'

Indeed, Althea was already dressed in her jacket and straw hat.

'Cassie is going with me,' she said. 'You must stay here, Mr. Waller, please. My father has a great deal to discuss with you. Now that you have come back I can leave him with a lighter heart. The excitement of his great success and the shouts of the people'—she laid her hand upon her father's—'have made him restless of late. Our old tranquillity is broken up. Will you stay here? Thank you. Perhaps now that I know he is in good hands I shall see some of my old ghosts

again. And perhaps,' she added, with what in other girls would have been a touch of coquetry, 'I may find you here when I come back.'

She laughed and ran away.

'See, Mr. Waller,' said her father, 'you have made Althea look happier already. Since you went away she has hardly smiled. It is the way of the girl. She knew that I was unhappy in losing you. She saw me restless for want of that communion of soul with soul which I had resumed after long abstinence. My friend, I did not conceal my sense of loss, and it made her unhappy too. It is her sympathetic way. Personally, of course, you were nothing to her except for your services to me. But it is her way.'

'It is a very charming way.'

'Yes. You may have remarked that she is pale and there are rings round her eyes. She inherits this quickness of sympathy from me. It is the only part of the poetic nature which she does inherit. But she will brighten up—nay, she has already begun—now we shall all be happier again.'

The simple faith in his power of bringing happiness along touched the young man with a little shame. True, he had brought happiness, but by what means?

'I will read you a few things that I have corrected and arranged—things new and old—well, you shall judge.'

He laid his hand upon a bulky pile of MSS. At another time the heart of the listener would have quailed. Now he felt not only resigned but even happy. It is only when a poet is reading his verses or when the parson is preaching, or while a piece of classical music is played that one can surrender the thoughts to perfect freedom and let them ramble and roam at their own sweet will. It is only at such times that one can sit at ease and peace while the imagination wanders and strays among flowery lanes and grassy banks. Laurence reclined in his chair with half-closed eyes, while his thoughts, undisturbed, dwelt upon the virtues and the graces of his mistress.

'I must show you,' the Poet went on, 'what progress I have made in my new volume. See—here is the Manuscript very nearly ready for the printers. Now for a little surprise for you—I intended it as a secret. But you shall have it at once. This manuscript, my friend, is going to be your own. I shall give it to you as a possession and an heirloom for your children's children.'

'This is indeed a great favour,' said Laurence cordially. 'I hope I know how to value it aright.'

'Nay, you deserve it. I had intended to arrange the poems for posthumous publication. But recent events have changed my resolution. A Poet has no right to be silent. I now under-

stand that: he fails in his duty if he fails to deliver his message: he should continually prophesy: he belongs essentially to the whole People: he is their's in a sense granted to no one else: it is his duty to find words for their thoughts: he is to be their Voice: he owes to the People everything in himself that is good and noble: for their sake he must cultivate great thoughts and live a pure life: to defile his life is to defile the stream of thought at the fountain-head: to refuse work is high treason to his mission: to withhold his work when it is completed as a kind of robbery. Yes—I understand—Heaven forgive me! I have committed this sin of treason. I have robbed the People of their own.'

He spoke in tones of exaltation. Surely such a man—one who held the office of Poet in honour so high—should be himself a great Poet. Honour and respect so great deserve that recompense.

'I am going,' he continued, 'to read to you this morning my forthcoming poems. Let me first arrange my papers.'

While he was arranging his papers Laurence drew a letter from his pocket and read it. The letter was as follows:

'My dear Cousin,—I know perfectly well who you are; partly because I learned long ago that my cousin Lucy married a certain David Waller of Rotherhithe, boat-builder, and that she emigrated with him when his affairs became involved: partly because in your face and eyes and your voice you resemble your mother so closely that no doubt is possible.

'It has been laid upon me as a plain duty that I should communicate with you. I wish, first, to seek your counsel upon a matter very close to me—the welfare of my son: and next I am anxious to save you and another person from unhappiness. I know why you hastily went away. You thought that a certain girl was engaged. That is not so. She is not engaged to the young man of whom you think, she never has been engaged to him: she never will be. You hurriedly jumped to a false conclusion. Come back, therefore, with what speed you may, and with a full confidence that nothing stands between you and the end which you desire.

'My dear cousin, in things earthly we of the Early Church make and meddle only as they may serve things spiritual. If I, who am called a Prophetess, interfere in an affair of the heart, it is because I am convinced that Althea Indagine and you are of those who climb upwards by means of earthly happiness. Others there are—and these are the majority—who are led to things spiritual by sorrow, misfortune, sickness or disappointment.

'There are other reasons why you should come back immediately. Trouble has fallen upon my Brother Lucius and his

household. He has himself lost his place and cannot find another. My niece Cassandra has also lost her place and cannot find another. Besides, she is fretting about a worthless man. The whole family will shortly have to depend upon the scanty earnings of my sister Cornelia and my niece Flavia. I take it that more than curiosity brought Lucy's son to Bank Side: I hear that your father has arrived at distinction and I hope wealth: I hope that you will be able to do something for your cousins. But come back. As for him who brought the trouble upon Cassie and caused you to think a falsehood, there is preparing for him an outpouring of wrath which he little imagines or suspects. I speak not of the certain punishment for sin, but of quick and sudden confusion.

'When, my dear young cousin, I look forward into the future and watch your figure moving onwards with the years that roll us always nearer and nearer to the Steps of the Throne, I see nothing but happiness before you, shadowed with the sorrows which must certainly happen in every earthly life. You will have Love, which hallows everything. If you meet with worldly success it shall not harden your heart, for Love will keep it soft. If you fall upon adversity, Love will enable you to bear it. The Early Church was founded on Love. In our Connection, it is Love which binds us together. Cousin, I have but one message to repeat to the world which still forgets it. Those who love cannot sin against each other. With us in the Early Church some may be husbands and some wives. But all love each other. This is our Creed—Love is all. If I can teach you that, your stay in this poor place will have been hallowed indeed.

'Your affectionate Cousin,

'CLAUDIA.'

Laurence finished the letter—he had already read it a dozen times—and folded it carefully. 'I have obeyed you, Claudia,' he said, 'I have obeyed you and I am here.'

'I am now ready, my friend,' said the Poet.

Laurence sat well back, shading his face as one who desires to concentrate his attention—in fact he did intend to do this, though for another purpose. Then the Poet began to read and his listener sat perfectly still and offered no interruption whatever.

'She is not engaged after all,' thus his thoughts began to run —'she is not engaged,' these words ran like the refrain that you may sometimes hear if you close your eyes in the rolling of a railway train, 'and something dreadful is going to happen to Mr. Oliver Luttrel. What will happen to him, I wonder? What is he after? Is the Prophetess able to cause misfortune as well as to foretell happiness? And what does she want with

me? And Althea is not engaged—Althea, the goddess, who came out of the sunset. She is free, and I am back again. And she was unhappy because I was gone. Oh! Althea, Althea!'

And the Poet went on reading his verses, sheet after sheet, with satisfaction unutterable. For the shouts of the multitude, the praise of the *Saturday Review*, and the sympathy of the young man who had come all the way from Australia in order to gaze upon him, filled his mind once more with the old belief in his own powers: never since the days when he first began to write verse and to read his poems over alone locked up in his own room, had he been so strongly moved by the beauty and the strength and depth of his verses.

'Oliver is coming in for wrath,' Laurence continued following on. 'I wonder how he will take it. Is Felix going to visit him with the weight of his long arm? Lucius has had to come down from the Higher Branch, and Cassie is out of place. Poor Cassie! and I am to do something for them all—and Althea is free——'

And the voice of the Poet was like unto the drone of the bumble bee among the sweet peas.

'In the house of a general practitioner in about the meanest part of London,' he thought, 'among streets which are squalid and people inexpressible, with no friends, except these artless cousins of mine, has grown up this flower of maidenhood, more delicate, more refined, than any of her sisters who live in the world. None of the meanness of her surroundings appears in her: it is as if this house was a calm cloister in the midst of the wicked world. She has lived with books and with this man—who has trained her in the poetry which he vainly emulates and in the lofty thoughts which he has borrowed and thinks his own And she is free—and more beautiful than ever.'

Two hours later Althea came back from her row up the river. It was, no doubt, the fresh breeze upon the river which had taken the dark lines from her eyes and restored their sunshine, given colour to her pale cheek and life to her drooping figure.

She opened the door and looked in, smiling.

'Well,' she said, 'if you have finished, you two, will you come to lunch?'

Laurence was sitting in the easy chair, his long legs outstretched, his head bent forward, his elbows on the arms of the chair and his hands leaning against each other by the finger tips. It was an attitude of profound attention—so profound that the thinker might have seemed asleep. The poet, regardless, went on mouthing his hollow o'es and a'es in rapt enjoyment of his own numbers. But at the girl's voice Laurence sprang to his feet.

'We have had,' he said, 'a most delightful morning.' He

took the Poet's hand and pressed it warmly. 'You will not ask me,' he murmured, 'for a critical opinion. I have been quite carried away. My mind has been filled with beautiful thoughts ever since you began to read. And now, Miss Indagine, may I be at your service for the rest of the day?'

CHAPTER XXII.

AN AFTERNOON ON LEAVE.

NOTHING more moves and softens the heart of man than a feast given in his honour. It need not be a great banquet at all: quite poor persons may give this banquet: nothing is wanted but the outward signs of welcome—the unusual adornments: the freshly cut flowers: the white napery: the little extra care over the dishes or the little extra display in their presentment. Laurence had never before broken bread at this household: he knew nothing of the household arrangements: yet he understood at once that Althea had decked the board with her own hands to do him honour. And though cold mutton formed the staple of the meal, there were flowers fetched from the neighbouring market—the Covent Garden of the Borough: there were plums and pears for dessert also from that hospitable emporium: there was a most delicate confection of apples and cream made by Althea's own hands: and though plain beer—that at eight and six the nine-gallon cask—formed the daily beverage of her father and her uncle, there was placed upon the table a square bottle the fragrance of which was alone sufficient to diffuse happiness. Laurence also remarked—Cassie being another guest—that both the girls had put on their best things. Cassie, indeed, looked as if a prayer-book alone were wanted to complete her costume. As for Althea, she had put on the one fine frock she possessed; it was of light blue, which suited her fair complexion, and she wore a dainty little ruff round her neck, though that charming part of feminine attire is no longer, I believe, in fashion, and she had a rose-bud at her throat.

'My dear,' cried her father, 'what have you done to yourself? You look changed indeed. It is from pure joy, Mr. Waller, because you have come back to me.'

Althea laughed and blushed a little. Then they all sat down and the cold leg of mutton became transformed into some rare and costly dish such as a Roman emperor of old would purchase with the annual revenues of three provinces.

The Doctor, for whom nobody ever waited, came home early

in the celebration of the banquet and found feasting and laughter in his generally silent house. Never had the Poet, even in his youthful days, when he sat among the Wits been more animated, never had Althea a brighter glow on her cheeks or a sunnier light in her eyes. Domestic joy, however, is a fragile kind of thing: a shower is always threatening: a cloud comes up in a minute: snow is even possible: and I have known a glacial wind to arise on a June-like evening, with sleet and hail and piercing cold in the most unexpected manner and in the happiest circle.

'We only want Oliver,' said the Doctor, looking about him cheerfully. 'With Oliver we should be complete.'

Althea flushed crimson, and Cassie bent her head. The Poet remembered something of what his daughter had said to him and dimly perceived, though his mind was naturally filled with his own verses, that this was an unfortunate remark. The Doctor, who had no verses to occupy his mind, more readily understood that something—he knew not what—was unfortunate in his remark.

A little thing, but for the moment it marred the festival. They went on talking and laughing, but there remained just a little constraint. And Cassie laughed no more. Melancholy, to think that one may introduce the harsh note of discord even when one possesses the most musical ear and is guided by the most harmonious intentions. In a better world, perhaps, we shall be able to read each other's soul through and through, so that no such mishap shall occur.

'And now,' said Althea, 'if you are still willing to take so much trouble, Mr. Waller, you shall show us the West End of London and your great Fashionable World.'

Laurence was more than willing. Certainly, he would have preferred Althea alone, perhaps because a Hansom cab is more pleasant than its elder brother: perhaps, because he was young and in love. However, better with Cassie than not at all; and, indeed, the girl looked pretty, and brighter than she had been wont to since her lover's desertion.

They plunged into the West End by way of Stamford Street, Westminster Bridge and St. James's Park and in a four-wheel. Few of those who belong to the World of Fashion, unless they happen to be professionals of the Music Hall, approach its gilded halls by the way of Stamford Street. The Park was beautiful, as it always is all the year round. But the leaves were falling off the trees and the walks and grass were covered with children playing and the unemployed asleep and presenting wonderful studies of fore-shortening to the observant artist.

'It is a beautiful place,' said Althea, 'and I like the ducks But the people are no better-looking than in Southwark Park.'

Then Laurence led them up the steps commanded by the Duke of York and showed them the street of Club Palaces.

'Your father,' he said, 'thought that the Poets and Wits congregate still in Fleet Street. But they have left it long ago and now they sit in the Athenæum Club with the Bishops. I don't know what splendid epigrams they make on the Bishops, because no one ever tells, outside. No doubt the Club is always bubbling with laughter.'

Then he led them up Waterloo Place to Regent Street.

It was in the middle of September. Every newspaper that respects itself had already said, once, but not more, that all London, except three millions, was out of town. This remark is due to September: it is the tribute of the season and must be rendered every year. I know not when it was first discovered. I have been able to trace it back as far as the autumn of the year 1808, when Margate was crowded and Brighton overflowed, and all London, except a million, was out of town. No doubt it began much earlier, but my humble researches have not traced it farther back. When the wags and the wits of the Forties used it, they altered the million to a million and a half. Twenty years ago it became two millions—it is now three. All London, except three millions, was out of town. The streets of Bond, Regent and Piccadilly presented to gilded youth—such as was left—an appearance of desolation complete: there were no carriages, and the shops, to those who remembered the season, had a faded and jaded look. Yet the streets were full of people: among them not a few country damsels who took London at the end of their August holiday, girls as bright and almost as good to look at as Althea herself, refreshing to the soul with their beauty, their youth, and their eagerness and curiosity.

Laurence walked beside Althea, Cassie generally a little behind. With her straw hat, her blue dress and her sunny face, Althea looked as if she had come straight from green fields, babbling brooks and shady woods. This was the reward conferred by Father Thames upon one who loved him long and steadily, constant even through the fogs of autumn, the biting East-winds of spring and the thunder-storms of July. The young man felt that pride in his mistress which is one of the fairest jewels of love. All the world, he thought, must be ready to worship her. Where was the meanness of the place in which she was born and had been brought up? Was it not able to tarnish ever so little the beauty and brightness of this fair creature? External meanness, my friends, has no more to do with the root of the matter than the frame has to do with the picture. What matter for the squalid streets if they were peopled by the girl with the noble figures of the past? What matter for the rough folk around her if the house within echoed

with the great words and the sweet songs of the Poets and Makers? What matter for the sordid lives around her if this girl's soul was lifted high above them? No touch of the meanness clung to her.

They made slow way down the street of shops, because even at the faded and jaded time there is always so great and splendid an exhibition.

'Oh, but you have seen it all before,' said the girl, looking up from a dream of lovely colours. 'It is a shame to keep you here so long.'

'No: we are come here expressly for you to see it. I am happy only in looking on,' said Laurence, softly.

'It is all so beautiful,' she said. 'The people so well-dressed: the broad streets: and the splendour of the shops——'

'You like everything,' he replied. 'You are at present uncritical. The time will come when you will be less easily pleased.'

'Yes: I like everything—the dresses and the bonnets. Look, Cassie, at that lovely costume—and the glove shops—and—oh! look at these things in brass—and the peaches and grapes. There is only one thing I do not like——'

'What is that?'

'The rows and rows of photographs of girls—who can they be that can bear to have their likenesses exposed for everybody to see?'

'They like it,' said Cassie from professional experience. 'The more people look at them the better they like it.'

'Now that you have been slowly down the street,' said Laurence, 'you must let me take you to a place where we can get some of the pretty things you have admired.'

No one will understand how two girls could have arrived at the age of twenty without ever going a-shopping. Yet it was most true. One of them, you see, had hardly ever seen a shop, and the other had never been able for lack of money to use the shops as their proprietors most desire. You cannot go shopping with a shilling.

Laurence took them to a very fine establishment at the lower end of Regent Street, where they were received by a gentleman of extraordinary politeness, who offered them chairs and called a most good-natured and obliging young man who made nothing of showing them all kinds of beautiful things. They admired so many things that when they came away there was an immense heap of gloves, neckties, handkerchiefs, ruffs, bottles of eau-de-Cologne, lace, glove-boxes, handkerchief-boxes, and no one knows what pretty things besides, all lying piled on the counter. And they were so much occupied that they did not observe how Laurence received a certain document, returned it with two crisp rustling pieces of paper, and wrote an address on a card.

Then they went into Piccadilly and from Piccadilly into Bond Street. There this young man took them into another shop. It was not in the least like the shop they had just left; within there was a place like a professional man's consulting-room, and outside nothing in the window but a diamond spray and parure on a red velvet cushion. They were received by a thoughtful person who appeared to be benevolent in intention. Laurence explained that he had two or three things to buy for his mother, and begged Althea to assist him with her taste in the selection. The things consisted of a bracelet, a necklace, and a ring, and they were all three set with emeralds.

'Next,' he said, 'I have to get a watch and chain. Will you choose them, Cassie, for me? Just, you know, the kind of watch and chain which you would like for yourself.'

When Cassie had chosen one, he threw the chain round her neck.

'It was for yourself,' he said.

The girl's eyes dimmed with the tearful sense of kindness. As for the necklace and the ring and the bracelet, he put them all into his pocket and came away without giving anything at all to Althea, which seemed to Cassie just a little disappointing.

For one thing this young man must be envied and admired. Whenever he went into Shopland, where there was a chance of meeting young ladies of his acquaintance, he always carried a pocketful of money, just as great men and rich merchants of the last Century were never without long purses filled at both ends with guineas. In these degenerate days a highwayman on Hounslow Heath would get nothing but a leather purse with two or three pounds in it and perhaps a Waterbury watch with a steel chain—not worth the trouble of a 'Stand and Deliver.' Formerly, a gentleman's purse was always good for fifty guineas at least. When Lord Nelson went into action in Trafalgar Bay, he carried ninety guineas in his pocket, to meet, I suppose, the casual expenses—the petty cash—of the action. It was a good old custom and it deserves to be revived, if only to give young men the opportunity of realising the purest and most innocent pleasure in the world—that of making a girl happy for the moment with the possession of a pretty thing.

'What shall we see next?' Laurence asked.

'If you are not tired,' said Althea, 'let us go to a picture-gallery.'

They went to the National Gallery, the Art collection where the Art-Critics and the artistic and the æsthetic people are never seen. This afternoon they had it all to themselves, save for the hapless painters who hang about the Gallery in hopes of getting a commission to copy. The artistic training of all three, it must be owned, wanted finish. As for the young man, he came from

the City of Sydney whither there go, I believe, every year many fine pictures: at the same time the young gentlemen of Sydney, in matters of art, do not consider themselves as having quite the same advantages as those of London. This being so, it is not wonderful if the three artlessly regarded all the pictures alike from the story-telling point of view. Exactly the same thing may be observed every year in the Royal Academy, because many of the most enthusiastic followers of Art have never got beyond the story-telling point of view. For enjoyment, they probably found as much in the Gallery as the finest Critic there. There are many pictures in the National Collection which tell really beautiful stories, and these, particularly where the colours had not quite faded, gave the girls a new sense of delight. When no story was told they passed over the picture without reference to the painter even if it were Raffaelle himself. Cassie, as became a person professionally acquainted with the great Mystery of Photography, with Carte or Cabinet, Plain or Coloured, perhaps allowed herself some small airs of superiority.

'It has all been beautiful,' Althea cried as they came out and stood under the porch looking out upon the Square. 'It is wonderful. Come, Cassie, we will go home. Thank you, Mr. Waller, you must let us find our own way home.'

'Indeed,' said Laurence, 'we have not nearly finished. There is a great deal more to be done. Why, we must have dinner to begin with.'

The girls laughed and yielded. They had already dined, as we have seen, off cold mutton and apples and cream. But who could resist this masterful young man?

He took them to a restaurant, one of the quiet kind, as you go up Regent Street on the left hand. There he ordered such a dinner as had never before entered into the imagination of either. These poor girls had never really dined—you cannot dine in the middle of the day: you may eat pleasantly, as you may stoke the engine with necessary fuel, but you cannot dine. Then again, these girls had never before been inside a restaurant, and it is very well known that there are few things which country girls, and those who have lived in suburban retirement, more ardently love than a dinner at a restaurant of the brighter kind. As for girls not liking an artistic dinner, that is the nonsense of the old sentimental kind, when they were supposed to eat nothing. At home, it is true, they never get an artistic dinner; a leg of mutton well hung and well roasted with an Apple Charlotte to follow is the best dinner they ever get: and a pretentious dinner-party with a succession of ill-made dishes is their worst: but a truly artistic, æsthetic, beautiful dinner they never have the chance of getting except at a restaurant. The pretty little dishes: the unexpected discoveries: the daintiness of the serving:

the things of which they had read, such as mushrooms and olives, now exhibited for the first time: the green things not piled up in great china bowls as at home, but in little dishes tenderly and lovingly as if they were things precious, as indeed they are: the *gateaux* and puddings, the creams and jellies and ices: the glass of champagne that so sweetly fills the brain—all these things helped to make this dinner joyous. And they all three laughed at nothing and talked merrily and were as happy as youth and everything that youth most desires could make them. It was the happiness which disappears and becomes impossible after five-and-twenty, to all the world except to those who linger and worship in the Courts of the Temple of Art—and they never grow old or lose this power of joy because they never cease to live with the young.

It was eight o'clock when the head-waiter brought coffee and the bill. If the girls had seen the addition and realised the sum of money gone to make that little feast they would have been smitten with remorse. But they did not see.

Outside, another cab was waiting them. This time, indeed, they thought they were going home. But no: the cab stopped before a brilliantly lighted portal and Laurence sprang out.

'It is only a quarter past eight,' he said, 'we are in very good time.'

The girls were passive now. They got out and followed him.

It was a theatre, and neither of them had ever been at the play before.

Laurence took them to a box where they sat speechless except between the Acts. Oh! The acted story—how wonderful it was! Oh! The heroine how sweet and the lover how tender and the villain—oh! the villain!—Some people might criticise the acting and the dialogue; these two saw nothing but the story. In a box opposite sat the author who had dropped in, having nothing else to do, and found interest enough in watching the two girls on the other side who never took their eyes off the stage and showed in their faces the play of the passions which he had created. Then he went home in a rapture and proudly said to himself, '*Ipse feci!*'

At half-past eleven they reached the house in New Thames Street.

Cassie said good-night and walked on, perhaps with intention, perhaps because it was really too late to be lingering on the door-step.

'You have had a pleasant day?' asked Laurence, holding Althea's hand for a moment.

'Yes—yes—Oh, a most delightful day.'

'Althea,' he whispered, 'tell me, are you—are you engaged to Oliver Luttrel?'

'No—no—no.' She snatched away her hand and ran into the house before he could say another word.

'There are some days, Cassie,' said Laurence, 'which can never be forgotten. This is one of them.'

They were alone, because everybody else was in bed and he was taking the refreshment of tobacco and a potash.

'I can never forget it. Nor can Althea. And oh! Mr. Waller, why did you give me this lovely watch?'

'I will tell you why before long. You think Althea was happy?'

'I am sure she was. How could she help being happy? Oh! It was like a dream.—And it is all over! And I am a photographer's girl again looking out for another place—And you will go away again and then we shall be ten times as dull and dreary as we were before you came. But oh!'—she laid her hand upon his—'what does it matter about us, Mr. Waller, if only you and Althea go away together?'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DAY AFTER.

If Laurence went again the next morning to the Poet's study, which cannot be denied, it was by special invitation—say, command—of the Master. It must not be thought that he haunted the place. To be sure, he lingered long after he had paid his daily tribute of generous appreciation; and that was in a laudable hope of finding an opportunity for seeing and talking with Althea. He had lost a most beautiful chance that last night had given him—your true lover is always finding and losing and finding again such opportunities, for the mood must suit the time and the occasion must find the mind ready: and he who most truly loves finds it the hardest to speak and sometimes the maiden runs away. But the God who provides the opportunity takes long to forgive when one is thrown away. Laurence had to go at last without seeing his mistress. Thus he was punished: and thus for a few days more Love continued to punish him.

Althea was, in fact, all the morning in her own room. She was on the stairs about to descend when she heard her lover's footstep. Then she ran back and stood unseen upon the landing, and listened while he walked into the study and greeted her father. She blushed because she knew very well that he was

come in the hope of seeing her—however great might be his admiration of her father's genius: she trembled because she knew what he wanted to say to her and because she still felt the warm pressure of his hand, and heard his voice, soft and sweet. She sat down and listened. The whole morning through she sat listening; from the room below came up the cadenced droning of her father's voice, while he read his poems: once or twice there was an interruption—a word or two—from his companion. Then the sing-song of the voice began again. All the morning through: and she had no desire to do anything: she did not tire, listening and thinking, and waiting. She sat quite still, her hands in her lap, with the gracious smile upon her lips, and the serious light in her eyes, which belong to woman at her best. The effect of the smiling lip and the serious eye has never yet, so far as I know, been produced by mere man. If the masculine person is happy, he laughs: if he is quite young or yet but half civilised, he laughs and capers and sings: he even ties on a horse's tail and claps horns on his head and takes a double flute, and, in the guise of a Satyr, dances round an Etruscan Vase. But the Woman who has made him happy, looks on with serious eyes and smiling lips.

When Laurence at length departed, Althea opened her door and went downstairs, her face composed and grave: nor could any one guess the tumult and the joy that filled her soul because now she knew indeed that she was loved and because she was ready to give her lover all he asked, her heart, her thoughts, her life, her very soul. Her father, thinking that all these things were his own and going to remain his own—such is the fondness of a parent and so great is the selfishness of man—informed her that he had passed a delightful morning and that his friend, Mr. Waller, really seemed as if he could not keep away from that Temple of the Muse—'And yet, my dear, with so profound a love for poetry, he lacks entirely, he tells me, the power of poetic expression. It is, indeed, surprising!'

Laurence wondered where she could be: when he left the poet he looked into the opposite room—Althea's work-box stood on the table but she was not there. She was perhaps on the river. But no: the tide was at its lowest: her boat lay wretched, ashamed, self-conscious, upon the mud. Was she by chance sitting with Cassie? No, Cassie was sitting by herself, her head in her hands, abandoned to melancholy reflections and the natural flatness of things after a day of festivity.

Before her on the table lay the 'things' which had now arrived: there they were—the lovely chiffons, the gloves and the glove-boxes and the bottles of scent,—yet they failed to bring her comfort. Girls may amuse themselves with gauds at times: yet they know very well that after all there is but one

thing in the world which is of real importance. And that had nothing to do with the pile of pretty things upon the table.

'Oh, Mr. Waller,' she cried, 'to think that you have bought all these things!'

'They are for Althea and for you. But you will give Flavia some of them.'

'If I had had them a month ago they would have made me happy. But now——'

'Now, Cassie, you have learned that the world is much wider than it seemed, and you have observed that it contains many thousands of young men——'

'Oh!' she cried, 'you don't know. How should you know?'

It was a cry of pain. So Ariadne might have wept over the beads which came too late to please her.

'If such things could make you happy, Cassie,' said Laurence, 'you should have the whole shopful.'

She shook her head mournfully. Observe that with her sister Flavia she still carried herself with an affectation of having nothing on her mind. She would not confess to the companion of her whole life, from whom she had never been separated; but to this young man, this stranger, she told all. And yet he did not love her nor did he pretend to love her. Perhaps a girl may find it easier to confess to a man than to another woman: men are always ready to judge a woman kindly and are quick to find excuses for her. Perhaps there was a certain sympathetic power in this young man which made him fraternal.

He stood over her, looking down with eyes of pity.

'Cassie, my child,' he said. 'The other girl—the one who was tricked so infamously, you know, by a wretch—directly she understood what an amazing Wretch he really was, shook him out of her heart, just as she might have shaken a viper off her dress. Then she went her own way and presently began to sing again just as if nothing had happened.'

'Oh! you don't know,' she repeated.

'To be sure, she went quite away from him—a long way off—where she would never see him again and never hear anything more about him or be reminded of him.'

'Oh! To go right away—never to be reminded any more!'

'Yes—would you like to go away?'

'If I should like! But it is no use. And besides how could I leave everybody—Althea and all?'

'Ah! How to leave Althea? well—courage—and a little patience yet. Courage! I feel almost as if my Christian name was Claudius. Shall I prophesy a little? But no: best wait a little.'

He left her and walked away. His wandering steps led him round about the streets of Poet and Player Land where Althea had walked with him. She was with him still in imagination. He heard her voice 'Here is the Bear Garden: this is the famous Rose Theatre and here is the Globe where they are playing "Macbeth" this very hour.' Presently, having been in a dream, he awoke and found himself in the Bridge Road and opposite the house which bore outside the announcement that J. Mayes had succeeded S. Norbery. He remembered his promise to call again and he knocked at the office-door.

Mr. Mayes was, as usual, engaged in casting up accounts with the assistance of a fat forefinger.

'Oh!' he said looking up. 'It's you, is it? You're the young gentleman from Australia. Well, Sir, and what might you be wanting now?'

'I have merely looked in, Mr. Mayes, as I promised, just to ask how you are getting on with that search—after the will, you know, that you signed thirty years ago.'

'Eight years ago, you mean.'

'No, thirty years ago, if you please.'

Observe that by continually reading the will, repeating the dates, and observing the circumstances as they must have happened, coupled with electric treatment, Mr. Mayes thought himself gradually arriving at a distant recollection of the events. The outlines of his picture were a little blurred and the whole thing had still a tendency to become a dissolving view. Now at the reminder of that other event which he remembered without any blurring of outline at all, the imaginary picture dissolved immediately and Mr. Mayes fell back into that quagmire of bewilderment from which he thought he was gradually lifting himself.

'I say eight years,' he repeated. But he grew red in the face. 'What do you know about it? What's the good of talking to you about it?'

'I see. If you had found the paper you would have told me. Go on looking for it.'

'Perhaps I've found something a good deal more important, Mister. But that's my business. If you've nothing more to say——'

'Nothing more.'

'Then, Sir, you needn't waste my time any longer. My time is my money.'

'Pity, then, that there are only twenty-four hours of money to spend. Good morning, Mr. Mayes.'

Laurence crossed the Bridge slowly, with the faint hope that he might meet Althea upon it. But she was not there. He looked down upon Thames Street: perhaps she was on her way

to or from St. Leonard le Size. The street was very full of people all rushing about and the air was darkened by bales and casks being hoisted to the upper floors of warehouses; but he could not see Althea anywhere. In fact she was at that moment sitting at the early dinner with her father and her uncle, graciously dispensing with liberal hand an autumnal plum pie, which moderns weakly call plum tart.

The baffled lover turned his steps westward, and walked through the City. When he got into Fleet Street he remembered the very remarkable reception or ovation accorded to the Poet. And in order to clear up a certain suspicion he bought a Sporting Paper. Yes: it was as he suspected. The Poet was indeed a popular favourite—the youth of New South Wales are not altogether to seek in the matter of sport—no more popular favourite had been known for many years. Yet Mr. Indagine had hastily jumped to a conclusion not warranted by the facts. For, in fact, the excitement was caused by an approaching event in which Fleet Street was interested from one end to the other, with every lane, court, alley, printing-press and newspaper office. In this event the Poet was to play a part: and the event was a duello: and the Poet was the descriptive name by which the favourite was known: and professionally he was a prize-fighter.

This point cleared up, Laurence drove to the Club of which he was a temporary member, and sat there all the afternoon, writing to his mother a faithful account of most that had passed —not all, because a young man cannot tell everything to his mother—not even if he is a Frenchman. And, as regards Althea in connection with the winged boy, Laurence as yet preserved silence.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CLAUDIA AND FLAVIA.

In the evening he remembered Claudia's invitation. The Prophetess lived in a small house near her own chapel—that is to say, in Union Street. Her house was distinguished from the rest in the daytime partly by the fact that it is the only private house—the rest being shops—and partly by its cleanliness, its fresh bright paint, the boxes of flowers in the windows, and the white doorstep. How could one who prophesies present so dingy an exterior as her more obscure neighbours? If one is only a workman employed in Barclay and Perkins', and is not specially distinguished by gifts spiritual, and never goes to Church

or Chapel at all, it matters very little if the landlord does refuse to paint the house, and if the doorstep continues black. Indeed, although so excellent an example is offered in Redcross Street close by, it must be confessed that æsthetically Union Street is still far, very far, behind Bedford Park. The door was opened by a neat little maid in the whitest of caps and aprons. She was a member of the congregation, and she thought it the highest privilege in the world to be allowed to work for the Prophetess, Sister Claudia, and a cause for laudable pride and uplifting. She might, also, have piqued herself, had she chosen, upon being the only servant in the whole of the street, and of many adjacent streets, but this kind of pride—pride statistical—tempted her not. Mostly she watched her mistress and anticipated her wants, made her tea strong and served her toast hot, kept her things tidy and the house clean; listened to her in Chapel and wondered how it was done, and hoped that she herself might some day—but that was the hope common to all the sisters of the Early Church. If one woman be so gifted, why not others?

The girl received Laurence as if she knew and expected him.

'You are Mr. Waller,' she whispered, admitting him, and closing the door noiselessly. 'Of course Sister Claudia knew you were coming. This way. She is in her own room.'

The narrow passage was covered with a thick carpet, which made their footsteps noiseless: the house seemed profoundly silent: a lamp stood on a bracket with a coloured shade over it, which lent an unreal and mysterious light. Laurence began to feel as if he were being conducted to the shrine of Apollo's own Prophetess by an attendant Virgin, one of those who surrounded the Oracle and laid flowers upon the altar.

The girl gently opened the door of what, in former days, would have been called the back parlour, and lifted a heavy curtain which hung across it within, motioning to Laurence. He obeyed and entered.

He found himself in a room which, to begin with, was full of flowers. Flowers were in vases on the mantelshelf and on the table and on the low bookcase. The air was heavy with their perfume. The room was furnished with a sofa, an easy chair, and three or four ordinary chairs; a large Bible lay open on the table: heavy curtains hung across the window and the door: there was a fire in the grate though the evening was not cold: and Sister Claudia sat in the easy chair beside it.

Among the Brethren it was well known that those who sat in Sister Claudia's room began presently to experience many singular sensations. Their experience differed. Some of them were contented to feel their heads go round: others declared that they lost themselves altogether, and were rapt in visions,

seeing things ineffable: others, again, heard voices whispering words of infinite comfort and joy unspeakable, but no one could remember, afterwards, what they were: others declared that the hearts of true believers glowed within them while they sat in that room: and some there were who testified that they had even been moved by the influence of the place and the presence of the Prophetess to repent and to confess their sins on the spot. One thing at least was certain: that the room was always full of flowers, and that there was always a fire burning, and that the air was always that of the hottest room in a conservatory of tropical plants.

As for Laurence, he found the atmosphere so hot and heavy, that while Sister Claudia was greeting him and pressing his hands, he felt dizzy and faint. The little sweet-voiced woman in the black silk dress, who murmured so gracious a welcome in a musical whisper, seemed as if she and her room and her voice and all belonged to a dream.

'Cousin Laurence,' she said, 'I knew you would come to-night. Not by any gift or vision. Not at all. I claim nothing of that kind, you understand. Felix—you know that great son of mine—told me you had come back—and I said to myself, "He will spend the first day with his friends in New Thames Street and he will call on me the day after." I was right. Sit down—the room makes you a little giddy, perhaps. That is because I always like my room warm. And the scent of the flowers is heavy. Sit down. It will pass away.'

The giddiness did pass in a few moments. When Laurence came to himself Claudia was murmuring pleasantly—what had she been talking about? And she was laughing softly and musically—a cheerful sympathetic laugh, as one who has a feeling for youth and the world, and not in the least like one who is a recluse, a saintly abbess, or the Head of a Connection.

'I knew that you would come, Laurence—I shall call you Laurence, just as if I had known you all my life—let me look at you again. I have only seen you once before, you know, when you came to the Chapel with Flavia. Yes—yes—you are Lucy's child. You have her eyes—but they are more like Florry's: and her mouth—yet that is more like Florry's, as well. But you are so tall—so tall. Lucy was a little woman. All the women in our family are little. And look at my great giant of a son. Why, he is bigger than you. And how is my cousin Lucy after all these years?'

'She was very well when I heard by the last mail. My father, you know, has greatly prospered and we are rich people.'

'Lucy rich!' she laughed pleasantly. 'Oh! poor Lucy—what a change from the old days! Lucy rich and dressed in silks and everything, with her own servants! I can hardly

understand it. Well, I am very glad. You shall tell me all about it. I am very glad. Tell her, Laurence, that I said so. I was never a party to the coolness. It was all Cornelia's doing. She took a huff because she thought Lucy should not have gone to Mr. Norbery without consulting us.'

'Oh!' said Laurence, 'it was ever so long ago. Surely it must be forgotten by this time.'

The wise woman shook her head.

'You don't know the world,' she said. 'You are young. Cousins and sisters don't forget slights. We never spoke to Lucy after that, and when she married we were not even told of it, let alone being invited to the wedding, which we had no right to expect and no call to complain about, as I always told Cornelia.'

'I am sure my mother has long since forgotten——'

'All I can say is that after the way Cornelia behaved to your mother I was surprised—I was indeed—when I heard that you'd gone to stay in the very house. I thought she would have had more spirit. Quite surprised I was.'

This familiar talk, in such a place, which only wanted an altar, a pot of incense and a tripod or so to make it a most beautiful *cella* or innermost sanctuary, struck Laurence with a sense of incongruity. But even a Prophetess must have some sort of social position to begin with, and when Claudia was a girl a great deal of family conversation turned upon the behaviour of their cousins and their friends. Few of them, in her circle, consistently lived up to the lofty standard required by Vicesimus Cottle. In such cases it was due to Cornelia, the eldest daughter, rather than to Claudia, to let them know and feel the reality and consequences of their backslidings. Therefore Lucy's sins, whatever they had been, were followed and punished by a coolness.

'So Lucy has done well. To look at you it is pretty certain that she has done well. I am very glad. Does she ever talk about us and the Bank and old times?'

'She told me to seek out my cousins and to do for them anything I could, provided they want any help. As you know, I have not yet told them who I am.'

'It was kind of Lucy. But she always had the best heart in the world. Dear me! Lucy! Florry! It seems like yesterday when we were all young together. Lucy and Florry! How pretty they were, both of them! Oh, my dear boy, if I could only show you that pretty pair as they were when they were eighteen and nineteen. But there! A son can never know what his mother was like when she was young. It is a sad thing for her to think of when she is old and has lost her beauty. Florry was the prettier of the two, according to some—of course we shall be beautiful again in the world to come.

But yet—Florry wasn't so serious and so steady as her sister, though she certainly was prettier. Poor Florry! Poor dear Florry!'

'What became of her?'

'I don't know,' Claudia replied shortly. 'Don't ask me. If any one knows it's Cornelia. Julia was fondest of Lucy, but Florry was my favourite, poor thing! And now we are all old women. I am past fifty now, and so is your mother—and—' the tears came into her eyes. 'The sight of you brings back the old times, my dear boy. You are so handsome and so tall, and you are so like your aunt Florry though she was so little. Well—you came to find us out and to offer us help if we wanted it.' She took his hand again and pressed it in motherly fashion. 'As for me I want no help. My people keep me. Though we are not rich, we share what we have and it is enough. But on the Bank I am afraid they will be soon in sad straits. My brother Lucius cannot find another place: it was a thousand pities that he was not brought up to something—but the Academy fell off sadly towards the end: all the respectable boys went to St. Olave's and St. Saviour's—and there was no money. And Cassie has lost her place, too. How they are all going to live I cannot tell. If they have to sell the house it will be like parting with all the history and the dignity of the Family. That would be dreadful, and we have been so respectable, Laurence,' she added pathetically. 'We have, indeed. Nobody was ever more looked up to than my father and your great-uncle.'

'I hope they will not have to sell the house. We will consider and do what we can. I will consult you.'

'Thank you, Laurence. You are so strong and tall that it makes one feel you are able to do everything. And now I do want your help—for Felix—for my son.'

'I have already had a long talk with Felix. He wants to go to Australia.'

'Yes, my poor boy is not happy. I thought it was a good thing for him when he got into the Accountant's Department of the Brewery, but he doesn't like desk work. I tell him he can't be always running races and playing football. He wants an outdoor life.'

'Perhaps my father could help him to that.'

'Then he frets because of Cassie. The poor boy has been in love with his cousin all his life. He used to call her his wife when they were only little things. And she is a pretty girl, isn't she? I was like her once. Oh! I don't wonder at it. Boys are so. And he frets because of the Chapel. He will never have a right feeling for the Connection unless he goes away, when perhaps he may remember it. He likes St. Saviour's

better although his mother has taken the place she now holds. The mother sighed. The Prophetess sat up and smiled with conscious pride. It was indeed a unique position which she occupied. 'Take him away with you, Laurence. I will let him go willingly, even if I never see him again, so long as it is for his own good. If he stays here, what with his rage against the young man who has behaved so villainously, and his galling office work, there will be mischief done.'

'He shall go with me, if he likes,' said Laurence. 'My father will find something for him to do.'

'As for that young man—evil will fall upon him: judgment will overtake him: remember that. Be surprised at nothing. But remember I told you that the ungodly should fall into the trap that he had laid for others.'

Then she fell to talking quite freely and naturally about her boy and of what could be made of him and how he was the best of sons, though not as yet converted, and of what a splendid success he would make of life if he only had a fair start and so forth, the Prophetess being entirely lost for the moment. But while she spoke other voices were heard outside the door and the curtain was pulled aside, and Flavia appeared holding by the hand—in fact dragging by the hand—the Chevalier.

'You here, Mr. Waller?' she cried in astonishment. 'But never mind. I don't care if all the world knows, though I thought I would tell Aunt Claudia first.'

'What has happened, Flavia? Don't tell me that you have lost your place as well as your sister.'

'No, I haven't, Aunt. My place is my own and I mean to keep it. Aunt Claudia, I can't stand it any longer.'

'Well, Flavia?'

'Oh,' she replied breathlessly, 'I have told him what I think and though I've had a world of trouble to persuade him to it he's come round at last and I've brought him here to talk it over with you.'

The Chevalier bowed his head gravely. Then he took Flavia's hand and raised it to his lips, with the politeness expected of his rank. As for the girl her flushed cheek and bright eyes clearly showed that something quite unusual had happened. Whatever it was it beautified her. She was carried out of herself: she no longer had the air of conscious propriety which generally reminded one of her aunt Cornelia.

'Oh! Chevalier,' she murmured out of a full heart. Then, flashing into a spirit which no one would ever have suspected of her—'Aunt Claudia! I declare there isn't such a good man in all the world as the Chevalier. No—there isn't, and there isn't a man in the world so put upon and ill-treated. He has been made a slave—yes, a slave—a white slave—by that Wretch who

pretends that he is his clerk, and isn't fit to black the Chevalier's boots. The man makes him sweep out the office: he makes him, actually as if he was a General at ten pounds a year, buy the food and cook it: yes, he makes him get ready breakfast, dinner and supper with his own hands—the Chevalier! Think of it! And all the rest of the time the Wretch makes him work at the desk. And no pay at all—or next to none. Nothing but his keep. And look at his clothes! They are in rags. He hasn't got but two pairs of socks and not a whole shirt left and he has to make his own cloth shoes because he can't afford to buy a new p'r o' boots. Oh! The poor Chevalier!'

'Well, my dear?' asked Claudia quietly.

'Aunt Claudia,' she took breath and considered a moment, I thought the Connection would have interfered. But they are too poor. I've spoke to Brother Matthias and Sister Tabitha but they both say the Connection is too poor. So I just resolved with myself what to do.'

'What is it?'

'I think I can guess,' said Laurence quietly.

'He's a man who ought to have a lecture room of his own to speak in. He is brimful and bursting with the message that is in him. Oh! Aunty, even you yourself on a Sunday evening haven't got a more splendid message to deliver.' The Chevalier shook his head gravely, but whether in denial or not is not known. 'For it is not only the Gospel of Love—you taught him that—but the Gospel of Love applied to life—to all our lives and to all the work of the world. Not only to saving our own souls, but to altering the whole world. You must hear him talk. He is nothing better than a prisoner now. And he is old. If he is kept in his prison much longer he will die. If we set him free, he will live a great many years perhaps and deliver his message.'

'Yes,' said Claudia, thoughtfully. 'If he really has such a message. But many brethren and sisters too have come to me declaring that they have a Message to deliver and they hadn't, my dear. They had nothing but the desire to have a Message. Chevalier, what have you to tell us?'

The Chevalier lifted his head and raised his hand. Then he spoke solemnly. 'I have to preach the Equality of Christian Love. Not as you preach it, Sister Claudia, for the spiritual benefit of the brethren, but for the material happiness of the whole world. I have to make mankind love each other, not only for the sake of their heavenly Lord, but also for the sake of their brotherhood. Then all injustice will cease, all self-seeking and oppressions. You show us how to save our souls, as Flavia said. I will show the world how to save their lives—by Christian love, by brotherly love. I shall take the doctrine of the Early Church

out into the world and teach it over again to all mankind. We are all equals: we are all brothers: there is none greater and none less among us. Sister Claudia, I will set open your doors: I will break down the walls of your little chapel: I will give to all the world what you have given to the Connection.'

'It is well spoken,' said Sister Claudia, watching him with eyes that looked full of fire in the crimson light of the lamp.

'I dreamed, at first, of lecturing on Humanity and its Rights. But I now see that I was providentially restrained. I must preach, not lecture. I must be an Apostle, not a Professor. It is by Apostles that the cause is advanced, and an Apostle may be a martyr.'

'You gave me your card once, Chevalier,' said Laurence. 'I had forgotten it. I will find you a Hall to begin with if you please.'

But the Chevalier paid no attention to this interruption. 'The Time has come,' he said, 'and the Means. As for the Means, Flavia has told you. I would not at first consent, for she is twenty and I am seventy. There seemed too great a difference between us.'

'He is only forty-nine years and nine months and twenty days older than me,' said Flavia. 'Difference? Nonsense! What's that?'

'A girl, then, has been found—gracious, self-sacrificing, noble—who will set me free.'

'I am going to marry him,' said Flavia, calmly. 'It is the only way out of it. I've got twenty-five shillings a week: we shall make it enough. He is the most frugal of men and the kindest heart as well as the noblest. But I don't know what father will say.'

'What do you say, Chevalier?'

'What can I say?' Tears stood in the nobleman's eyes. 'She finds me in a prison: she offers to let me out: she finds me full of my message: she enables me to deliver it: she is young and I am old: my time for Love is over, yet she brings me Love: she sacrifices herself to me. What can I say? What do you expect me to say?'

Claudia looked at Laurence. There were questions in her eyes.

'Yes,' he said, rising. 'I will leave these lovers with you, Sister Claudia. Perhaps they could do no better. Flavia, you understand what you are doing. Yes, I am sure you do. You will make this good man happy. I do not think that you will ever repent your sacrifice.' Then he laughed lightly. 'When you are the wife of the Chevalier what shall we have to call you?'

'I shall not take my husband's title,' said Flavia of the Tele-

graph Department. 'I have made up my mind to remain simple Mrs. De Heyn. In the Early Church, Aunt Claudia, they dropped their titles.'

'I came to London on a holiday,' Laurence addressed himself an hour later, to the Shade of Vicesimus in the Best Bed Room. 'I was told to find out my cousins, and learn what they were doing. I have now got a family, a whole family, a most interesting family upon my hands, and I hope my mother will be satisfied and pleased. I have also found,' he paused and smoked in meditation for a while, watching the smoke curling in the air, 'and I hope,' he added, not finishing his sentence, 'that my mother will be pleased with that as well.'

CHAPTER XXV.

AN INCREASE TO THE FAMILY.

It was a singular circumstance that all the misfortunes of this very respectable family should arrive together, like a troop of comedians, and that at the very time of the unknown cousin's arrival. Consider. Before he came Lucius was happy in the possession of his Guarantee, though business was deplorable. Cassie rejoiced in the possession of a lover and of a place where her conduct and her pleasing manners gave every satisfaction. Flavia had not assumed the sole responsible charge of an elderly philanthropist. Nay, more. Oliver had not been tempted: consequently, he had not fallen. To fall, without being tempted, argues depravity. Althea, happy girl, was still fancy free and could go forth to watch her ghosts upon the river and the river bank. Felix, even though he loved his cousin, was not consumed with wrath on her account, and if he disliked his work, did his best to conceal that dislike. And as for Mr. Mayes he was still able to remember the witnessing of Mr. Norbery's Will thirty years ago without the intrusion of that vacant space where another group should have been. Those who believe in the Evil Eye might have strengthened their faith by a consideration of this case.

The family, large and interesting as it was, became, as you will now see, larger and much more interesting. Nobody, in fact, can quite understand the extent of his own family, especially in that great class called the Middle, to which most of us have the honour of belonging. If one begins working backwards and sidewards, vertically and horizontally, quite surprising results

may be obtained. A Milk Walk, a Baptist Chapel, a Board School, a grocer's shop, say, at Old Ford, a Company in a Line Regiment, a blacksmith's forge, a Bishop's wife, may be sprung upon the Family Tree when a member of the Middle Class begins to investigate. For the Middle Class is not only the backbone of the country but also the legs and the ribs and the shoulders of it, and is intimately connected with the toes and the heels and the ankle joints of it. Therefore the discovery which Laurence was about to make, though it might be romantic, could not be called wonderful. The only wonderful thing about it was the coincidence of its happening the very day after a certain conversation. One who writes a novel would hesitate to introduce such a coincidence, but the plain historian may safely venture to do so because in daily life they happen continually.

Think. At breakfast you have been talking of a man, a woman, or a subject. After breakfast you put on your hat and walk abroad upon your daily business among the haunts of men. Presently something happens to you directly concerned with that man, that woman, or that subject. You go home in the evening and you tell the story, beginning with the formula, 'Most remarkable coincidence! We were talking of Jack Scallawag this very morning, saying that it was ages since we heard what had become of him. When I got into town, there he was at my office, and wanted to borrow ten pounds—confound him! He didn't get it: but—most remarkable coincidence!' It was therefore in no way remarkable, but only one of the natural incidents—the co-incidents—of everyday life, that the very person of whom Sister Claudia was talking in the evening should turn up in the morning.

Finding that Althea sat resolutely in the study with her father, and resisted every hint that she should arise and go forth with him, Laurence gave it up, and wandered forth into the City, where he pleased himself by walking up one street and down another, lighting upon churches in unexpected corners, bits of churchyards, each as big as a dining-table, with tall warehouses round them, odd squares and closes, sometimes with a tree or a pump in them, winding lanes, merchants' houses, solid and substantial, dating from the Great Fire, towers standing all by themselves—there is one in Mark Lane which, if it were in some old French town, all the visitors would crowd to see: and another in Thames Street, without counting the fine old Tower of Hackney—and all kinds of things, to the beauty of which Althea had educated his eye. He roamed in perfect happiness up and down Harp Lane, St. Mary-at-Hill, Rood Lane, Mincing Lane, Seething Lane, Crutched Friars, America Square, and the Minories. All these names he knew, and it pleased him to read them at the corners, and to connect them with their

memories and the girl who had taught him all these curious things. Then he found himself in a labyrinth of streets whose names told him nothing—indeed there is nothing in the name of Mansell Street to suggest Goodman's Fields, or the old Theatre and David Garrick; Haydon Square has no history. Great Alie Street has, it is true, a certain strangeness of name which provokes curiosity—was Alie a girl—the toast of Whitechapel?—was there a Lesser Alie as well as Alie the Great? Prescott Street, also arrogating to itself the title of Great, does not point out the house where Cloudesley Shovel lived: nor does it record the fact that here the houses were first distinguished by numbers instead of signs. Civilisation, like religion, springs from the East and travels westward. Laurence was beginning to think that a cab would take him in half an hour to Club and Lunch land, and that he had perhaps done enough for one morning, and that this particular precinct was less interesting than some others, when he became aware of a woman going slowly along on the other side of the street. At first, he hardly remarked her—there are many poor women to be seen in this part of London. Next he became aware that he was somehow familiar with the figure. The woman was wretchedly clad—there are many women in London who are wretchedly clad: she crept along slowly, as if she was feeble: she hugged the houses as a ship may hug the shore. By her carriage, by her walk, by her miserable clothes, you could discern the depths of her poverty and wretchedness. There are, however, a great many wretchedly poor women in London; why did he seem to remember this woman?

She stopped: on a doorstep lay a thick crust of bread, flung there by some child who did not want it. She snatched it with eagerness and began ravenously to devour it. When she stooped, Laurence saw her face—a face thin and wan—he knew her then. It was the poor woman who had come out of the Church that morning when he visited Cornelia. Althea knew the woman. She was the Disgrace to the Family.

Then—he knew not why—a vague feeling of disquiet seized him—an unformed apprehension of he knew not what. He crossed the road swiftly and accosted the poor creature.

'I have seen you before,' he said.

The woman looked up and shook her head.

'I do not remember you, Sir.'

'You were coming out of St. Leonard's Church.'

'I go there sometimes.'

'You look in trouble. Can I help you?'

'Can you help me?' she repeated. 'Look at me——'

'Then,' said Laurence, 'let me help you.'

She spoke in a sweet low voice which reminded him of some-

thing—he knew not what. Her eyes, when she lifted them, were limpid and large—they made him think of Sister Claudia; her face was thin and wasted, but there were the traces, unmistakable, of bygone beauty upon her fine features. Her face presented none of the signs of degradation and drink which generally belong to persons in these truly melancholy circumstances. She was slight of stature and narrow in the shoulders—a little woman who in her youth might have been one of those fairy-like women who do so mightily rejoice the masculine eye, merely to see them walk or dance, only to hear them laugh and sing. As Laurence connected this poor creature with youth and beauty, he thought somehow first of Cassie and then of Sister Claudia.

'Miss Indagine knows you,' he said. 'You have at least one friend.'

'I had—But they turned me out of my room and now she does not know where to find me.'

'Why not tell her?'

'Because I am past her help. She has no money to give me. And besides it would only make her more unhappy. When last she came she was very unhappy.'

Were the very stones going to cry out upon this young man because he ran away?

'Where do you live?' he asked her.

'I have found a room in Tenter Street. But I don't know how long I shall be able to keep it.'

'Will you take me to your room? At all events we could sit down and talk.'

'Sit down? In my room?' She laughed scornfully. Then she looked up quickly. 'You shall come,' she said. 'Oh, yes! you shall see my room. It will do you good to see my room. You are young and you are careless. You shall understand what misery means. It will do you good to see how we live—we who have nothing to wait and pray for but Death. And perhaps Death itself will make our fate no better. Come with me—you.' She lifted her head and quickened her step with the strength that comes of sudden passion. But it lasted no longer than a fire of shavings. Her head dropped, her feet dragged—she fell into her former carriage of patience—the patience of suffering, Laurence felt, as he looked down upon this poor bundle of rags, was even more pathetic than the short-lived flame of rage which had betrayed the misery of her soul. Why did she suffer so? What was her history? 'You are,' said Cornelia, 'the Disgrace of the Family.' What had this poor creature to do with the Family of Vicesimus Cottle, the great and respected Academician of Bank Side? And again a vague disquiet seized him, for he too was one of the Family.

'I live here,' said the woman. 'You can come upstairs with me if you please.'

She led the way up the stairs, dirty, broken, stripped of the bannisters, to the second-floor back, a small room which at all events should have been light and airy. It was furnished with a kettle, a teapot and a teacup. Nothing more. Nothing at all. Some travellers have remarked upon the very small amount of personal luggage which is wanted to carry an Equatorial African through life—a pipe, a bow and arrows, a spear, a piece of cloth, perhaps a knife or an axe. Really, nothing more. But there are people in London who have reduced their wants to even smaller limits. A kettle, a teapot, a cup, a plate, a knife. Nothing more. These simple things completed the furniture of the whole room. There was nothing more—not even a bed, unless a heap of shavings in the corner made a bed: not a chair or a table—Nothing.

'You see,' said the tenant. 'This is where I live. Will you sit down and have a talk?'

'Good Heavens! Are you so poor as this? I thought that nobody——'

'I dare say there are not many quite so poor as myself,' she said. 'There cannot be many people in the world quite so poor as I am.'

'Poor? But you are destitute. You have nothing. Not even a bed to sleep upon.'

'Not even a bed,' she repeated. 'I am destitute.'

'And you live here—quite alone?'

'Quite alone. No one in the house knows me: no one ever comes here: I am quite alone in the world. At night it doesn't matter, because I can sleep; but in the day it is terrible to sit on the floor with nothing to do. Then I wander about the streets.'

'But how do you live?'

'Sometimes I get a little sewing to do—sacks and bags and things—I can work very well, but the work is hard to get—there are so many poor women who can sew—I should get on if I had regular work, because I can live on very little—oh! very little. For a week and more I haven't even had my cup of tea. I wonder if you understand what it is—not even to have a cup of tea—and I have lived upon bread. To-day I had not even any bread left and I should have eaten nothing, if I had not picked up a crust just now. Perhaps I shall pick up another crust by-and-bye. Sometimes there are lots of crusts lying about in the streets.'

'And to-morrow?'

'To-morrow—oh! but you are going to give me something,' she laughed—a soft and pleasant laugh—yet not mirthful—and

it disquieted Laurence because it made him remember something —he knew not what.

'Yes, I will give you something. But the day after and the day after that?'

'Once a week I have a little piece of work for which I get a shilling. I clean and dust the church where Corn—the church of St. Leonard in Thames Street.'

'But you cannot live on a shilling a week.'

'This room is only two shillings a week—to be sure I am already in arrears, and if they could find another tenant they would turn me out very quickly. When I am turned out I do not know what will happen.'

'Have you no friends at all?'

'I have cousins, but I must not go to see them. And Althea Indagine was my friend, but I have lost her now because she does not know where to find me—no—I have no friends.'

Laurence walked to the window and looked out upon the chimney-pots and the roofs.

'It is terrible,' he said presently, in husky accents. 'How can a woman fall into such dreadful poverty?'

'It is very easy,' she replied. 'Oh! you have no idea how very easy it is. I could show any girl the way. She has only to do exactly what I did, and in time she will fall into exactly the same misery.'

'What is your name? Tell me who you are.'

'Oh! my name—my name. The people in the house call me Mrs. Sinclair. Why not? It does as well as anything.'

'Where is your husband?'

'I have never had a husband.' She met his inquiring eyes with something like a blush and turned her head. 'No: I have never had a husband. But don't—oh! please don't tell Althea. Cornelia calls me the Disgrace of the Family. So I am. Yes —yes—I am a disgrace to any family, and mine was so respectable—oh, so respectable.'

'Who are you then?' cried Laurence, his cheeks suddenly burning with a dreadful thought. 'Tell me who you are.'

'You would not believe, would you?—that such a miserable thing could ever belong to a respectable family—well then—' but she stopped. 'I don't know who you are, Sir, I have promised Cornelia that I would never let my old friends know anything about me. You were with Althea Indagine—you don't know what mischief you might do.'

'Tell me, quick,' cried Laurence. 'I swear that no mischief shall happen. Since I am a—a—friend of Althea you ought to trust me.'

'It is not mischief to me. It is disgrace to them.'

'Trust me,' he repeated, taking her hands, poor bony hands

that had once been girl's hands, pretty and tiny, a joy to look at. 'Trust me. You shall do no harm either to yourself or to any one, and Althea shall never know.'

'I call her Althea—by her Christian name—because I knew her father before she was born—Clement Indagine—when we were all girls together—oh! a very long time ago—thirty years ago—when Claudia and Julia and——'

'Good God,' cried Laurence, 'I believe you must be—quick—who are you?' For now the dreadful thought had ripened to a more dreadful suspicion, and this already to a certain conviction. Who could she be? Why—who else could she be, than—than—'Quick,' he cried again. 'Tell me who you are?'

'Why do you look so strange?' she asked. 'What does it matter to you who I am?'

'Oh!' he groaned, 'if you knew!'

'Will you promise—you look as if you would be true to your word—will you promise faithfully not to tell Cornelia that you know?'

'Yes, yes, yes, I promise. She shall not know.'

'Because, after all, she has done what she could for me. Her tongue is cruel sometimes, but not always—and only last Saturday she was kinder than usual. She gave me a paper bag full of victuals and she began to talk all of her own accord about the old times. "Florry," she said—it was such a long time since she called me Florry that I began to cry—"Florry"——'

'You are Florry,' cried Laurence. 'You are my mother's only sister—Oh! my GOD! you are her sister Florry!'

In a single moment he understood the meaning of it: the reason of Cornelia's desire to keep this poor creature and all knowledge of her from the family: the whole miserable history. This was the lost sister whom he was to discover if possible. And now he had found her and she was this starving woman in rags and destitution, paying penalty so dire for her sins and follies.

But the woman shrieked and shrank back from him. If this had been said and done in the street she would have fled. But in the room she could not fly. She covered her face with her hands and sank upon the ground, where she crouched moaning and crying and sobbing.

Laurence bent over her and tried to raise her. Nothing but the misery was in his mind.

'I am your sister's son,' he said. 'I am your nephew. Oh! It is all over: the misery is finished. Don't cry, don't cry. Thank God! I have found you at last. It is all over—all the starving and the misery. Don't cry, oh! don't cry. I shall take you away and dress you and get you into a better lodging, and I

shall carry you out to Australia to my mother, your sister Lucy, whom you loved so much. Don't cry any more. Althea shall come. We will bring you back to happiness again. Lift up your poor head and be comforted. Now we have found you we will keep you and never let you go again. You are Florry—you are my mother's only sister——'

So he went on, saying he knew not what, talking of consolation and comfort—whispering messages of love while the poor woman still wept and cried that now she was punished indeed since she could no longer hide her shameful head from her innocent sister.

Presently he led her, trembling and shaking down the stairs and out into the street. And how he strengthened her with food and bought clothes for her and refused to leave her until he had established her in a decent lodging where she would be looked after—these things belong to the 'Book of the Things Left Out.'

What he found was a creature half mad with want and misery: what he left was a woman, thin and worn, her soft eyes sad but not despairing, her face gentle and calm, the wildness and the horror gone out of it: her starved and frozen heart opening once more in the warmth of love. But alas! for such as Florry, who have never quite lost the better self; with love returning comes avenging shame.

She slept after long years of hardness in physical ease. She had eaten: she had been clothed: warmth and rest wrapped her about. When she laid her head upon the pillow she felt still her nephew's arms about her neck: his kiss upon her cheek: and she heard his voice—Lucy's voice—murmuring in her ear. All was over: all was forgotten: she was no longer Mrs. Sinclair, the woman of two pair back, in arrears with her rent: she was Florry, Florry again—and across the water Lucy was stretching forth hands of welcome and crying tears of joy. But in the morning was to come that other Messenger—he with the *Flagellum*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN RICHMOND PARK.

THEY sat in silence on the grass beside the lake of Richmond Park. The afternoon was warm and soft in the season of early autumn, the only one of the four which hardly ever disappoints us. The light of the sloping sun lay upon their faces, the ferns were brown and the trees were golden: it was so quiet that one

could hear the whirr of the swallow and the browsing of the deer close beside and the snapping of the twigs when a rabbit broke cover and ran across. They were hundreds of miles from the haunt of man: there was no rambler in the Park that afternoon except themselves. There are many sweet and quiet spots round London whither the people come not, except a few on Sundays. There is a certain corner of Hampstead Heath which they know not even on the Sunday. There is a bit of Epping Forest which is always deserted; there is a glade or two still left of Hainault Forest where you may wander undisturbed even by the gipsies: but the quietest and loneliest spot of any is that beside the lake in Richmond Park where the herons fly overhead and the wild-duck make long lines and acute angles against the sky, and the deer roam undisturbed and the wood-birds sing. Hither Laurence brought the two girls and here they sat in silence, partly because all three were full of thought, and partly because the place was too beautiful for idle talk.

'If it would only last,' said Althea with a sigh, 'if we could only go on sitting here without getting tired, and if the sun would not set—Oh! it seems as if one could never forget this place and this afternoon. Yet, perhaps to-morrow we may have forgotten half. Let us try to remember it, Cassie. We will say to ourselves—there was the Lake: there was the Bridge: there was the Boat-house—we must not leave out the reeds: behind us were the trees with the twigs lying about the roots and the brown fern stretched out beyond the trees: there was the heron flying overhead with his long legs behind him: there was the sunlight on the water and the blue sky and—oh! if one were a painter to put it all down upon canvas and preserve the memory of it for ever!'

'And in an hour or less,' said Cassie, 'we shall be back again on Bank Side. Mr. Waller, you are grave to-day. When you took us to the West End you laughed and talked. Has anything gone wrong?'

'No; I have only something more to think of,' he replied. 'It is, in fact, something that ought to make one happier.'

'Mr. Waller,' said Cassie, after another little silence, 'tell us at last—tell us, why did you come to Bank Side first of all—you who had all the rest of the world to choose?'

'Bank Side is a very picturesque place: and as Althea knows, it is full of Elizabethan ghosts.'

'But it was not to see ghosts that you came.'

Laurence, who had been lying at the girls' feet, rose and walked to the water's edge, and looked across the lake. Then he came back to them so grave of face that Cassie was afraid of him. Yet every woman likes to see serious purpose in the face of a man.

'I came to Bank Side, Cassie,' he said, standing before them, 'not to see the Elizabethan ghosts, but to make your acquaintance.'

'Mine?'

'Yours, and that of your father and the rest of you. I had also to find out, if possible, the truth about certain little things for one who formerly lived near you. Well, I made your acquaintance, and I found that as for these things I could do no good. So I thought I would go away again. And then I—I made other friends, and I saw that there was a Story going on: so I thought I would stay and see the end of it: but somehow I became a character in the story, which served me right for looking on: and then I fancied that the story was ended, and so I went away. But about that I was wrong, and so I came back again. And now the story seems nearly finished.'

Both girls were silent, because they also were characters in that story.

'It will be finished very soon now,' he said.

'What will the end be like?' said Cassie.

'I cannot say. I only know what I hope. I came here a stranger among all you people, of whom I had never heard. That was only three months ago. What have you become to me? For even if I were now to go away and leave you, I could never forget you.'

'Oh! but what have you done for us?' said Cassie.

'I came among you with a light heart,' Laurence went on, 'thinking to amuse myself. It is not precisely amusement that I have found here: it is a new interest in life, and a change in all my thoughts.'

He spoke to Cassie, and he avoided looking at Althea, who gazed straight before her and seemed not to hear. But her lips quivered and her eyes softened.

'I have a thing to tell you all,' Laurence added after a little; 'but you and I, Cassie, have been such special friends that I should like to tell you now. May I?'

'Oh, yes, if you please.'

'It is a confession. I came among you with concealment of the truth. When I found, to my surprise, that none of you knew what my name, I thought, would have suggested, I did not tell who I really was, and I have never yet told any of you.'

'But we know,' said Cassie. 'You are the son of Sir David Waller, who is Prime Minister of New South Wales.'

'That is certainly true. But my mother, Cassie, is your father's first cousin.'

'Oh!' Cassie jumped to her feet and clapped her hands. 'Aunt Cornelia said the other night that you had her cousin

Lucy's voice and her face—and nobody took any notice of her. Oh! then you are my cousin, too.'

'I am your cousin, too, Cassie.' He held out both his hands.

'Oh! you are my cousin—oh! my own cousin!'

'Yes. And so, you see, you must call me by my Christian name in future. But you need not tell Flavia or anybody just yet. It is our own secret to ourselves.'

'Oh! Laurence!—I am to call you Laurence?—I am afraid it seems like taking a liberty. What will they say? And is your mother, my cousin, too, really and truly a ladyship? Do they call her my lady?'

'Certainly, sometimes.'

'And are you really rich, and do you live in a big house?'

'Yes, and there is room in it for you. I have written to my mother to have it kept for you. Because, Cassie, you see, the story about the girl who went away and forgot her troubles is going to be a true story after all. You are going out to Australia with me, away from the old place, and you are going to forget—all kinds of things.'

Cassie hung her head and said nothing.

Then they were all silent again—and what each thought of I know not. The girls sat side by side—and Laurence walked slowly along the grassy borders of the lake while the sun sank in the west, and the warm autumn day came to an end.

Presently he returned to them.

'There goes the sun,' he said. 'Let us walk back to Richmond and have dinner. Even on the most beautiful day of the year—this has been the most beautiful sunset of all this year, except one—we must have dinner. For my own part the happier I am the happier does dinner make me. Men are made so. Althea'—he called her by her Christian name and it seemed the right and natural thing—'have we taken you too far? Are you tired?'

Then they walked back in silence through the deepening twilight. Presently Cassie stole her hand upon Laurence's arm.

'I am so glad,' she murmured, 'I am so very glad you are my cousin. I will go with you anywhere—anywhere—to get away from here. Are you sure your mother will like to have me?'

The tables at the Star and Garter are not crowded on a weekday in September. Laurence took one of those which look out upon the winding river and the broad valley. At first they had the great dining-room to themselves, except for a young couple returning home after their honeymoon. It was the last evening before they were to settle down in the dingy

suburb of the manufacturing town: the last evening of romance: next day, and every day afterwards, the counting-house and the factory. When the College of Physicians has lengthened our span to a hundred and eighty, or perhaps two hundred and fifty, the honeymoon will take ten years at least.

The dinner was not so gay as that one in Regent Street: but they talked with cheerfulness, and perhaps it was happier. Cassie called Laurence cousin, a hundred times; she laughed to think what Aunt Cornelia would say; she permitted herself little archnesses of speech which are allowed among young persons connected by a tie which is too slender ever to become, like some family ties, a chain.

The waiter exactly understood the situation, although Cassie was the principal talker. He recognised the Queen of the Feast: he hovered around Althea, showering upon her those attentions which only a sympathetic waiter can bestow: this was an English waiter, of course. He of Germany or Switzerland cannot understand these *nuances*; he knows not the poetry of his profession. We must not set him down as mercenary because his thoughtful attentions received an ample guerdon when the little addition was discharged. Chords of the heart may be touched without a thought of tips. This waiter had been young. Shall not beauty, youth and love between them be able to strike the trembling lyre and awaken as upon an Eolian harp a tender symphony.

The evening, however, was not to finish without another adventure.

At the close of their feast, when the waiter had brought them the coffee, a party of half a dozen entered the room and noisily took possession of a table reserved for them. Three were ladies and three men. The ladies, who wore magnificent attire and were all three very splendid in appearance and of commanding beauty and possessed of complexions most wonderful and eyes most curiously bright, laughed and talked rather more loudly than is customary with ladies in a public place. One of the men corresponded in appearance and manners to the ladies: he looked as if he could have played to the life the part of a buccaneer or a gentleman highwayman, or a gallant Cavalry rider under Prince Rupert. He would be set down by those who knew the world as a bookmaker, adventurer, modern privateer, or, to sum up, a bounder: his laugh was loud; his shoulders were square, and he carried a swagger as pronounced as that of any old Peninsular Officer in the Twenties. He was a good-looking creature, black of hair and of eye, who proclaimed in his face the fact that morality or principle of the old-fashioned kind was not his strongest point. The second was a young gentleman of more pleasing appearance and quieter manners. He took his part in

the loud laughter of his friends. And the third, who placed himself at the head of the table and was apparently the host, was none other than the future President of the Royal Society—Oliver Luttrel. One of the ladies was the divine Julia and one of the gentlemen was the gallant Mr. Harry Stanley. Althea turned her head and saw him.

'There's Oliver,' she cried. 'Does Oliver give dinner-parties at Richmond? And what a strange set of people with him?'

Cassie looked round and saw him too. He was bending over one of the ladies—she knew their kind: she had assisted at the taking of their photographs: Oliver at the Star and Garter giving a feast to actresses of the kind who laugh loudly and paint thickly—Oliver who had no money—Oliver who thought about nothing but science: Oliver who had been making love to Althea: and with such a party! But Althea paid no more attention: it was quite indifferent to her if Oliver entertained strange goddesses with feasting and champagne. The giver of that banquet, fortunately, did not see them: and they presently went away, the laughter of the party ringing in their ears.

'Is your idol shattered yet?' Laurence whispered in the train. 'He swore once that he loved you. Then he changed his mind. He swore that he loved Althea—as if any man could love Althea and give dinners to such people as those! Cassie, where is your lover as you imagined him?'

'If the idol is shattered,' said Cassie sadly, 'give me a little time, Laurence, to clear away the fragments.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TWO WILLS.

'A GENTLEMAN, Sir, wants to see you.'

'To see me? Nonsense. It is the Doctor he wants to see.'

'No, Sir, it's you. He asked for Mr. Indagine.'

The Poet took the card.

'It isn't a man,' he said. 'It is a Firm—a Firm of solicitors—Messrs. Racket, Saye and Seal, Lincoln's Inn Fields. What can lawyers want with me? Perhaps—' his thoughts, as usual, running upon his great literary fame—'Perhaps they come from some Firm of Publishers.'

'I will go into the other room.'

'No—no—why should you do that? There is only Althea

in the other room. Stay here. I have no secrets. Why, if you come to think of it, he *must* be sent by some publishers. No one else can have any business with me. He has been sent to ask what price I put upon the new volume. Advise me, my friend. Stand by me and assist with your advice. In all such things I am indeed a wretched bungler.'

'Shall we see, first, what he wants?' said Laurence, incredulous as to the firm of publishers.

It was not the Firm in person, but their representative, who waited without. He was a young gentleman recently qualified, who esteemed himself fortunate in being able to find in these bad times a berth as clerk at a modest salary in so good a House. The Casual wards are reported to be every night crowded with young solicitors, young barristers, young physicians, young surgeons, young engineers, young architects, young novelists, young dramatists and young poets on the tramp looking for jobs and finding none. He who escapes the Casual ward is accounted happy. This young man bore his good fortune without boastfulness. But, being young and therefore easily put out by the unexpected, he was somewhat impressed, on being introduced into the room, by the strangeness of the place. One hardly looks to find upon the Bank a student's library with all the properties complete and an unmistakable student, a man of ink, in a brown velvet jacket and long white beard.

'Mr. Clement Indagine?' He addressed himself to the Poet. 'I bring you a letter and a packet.'

'A letter? From what House do you come, Sir?'

'From Messrs. Racket, Saye and Seal. The letter is from your late brother, Mr. Æneas Indagine.'

'It's the Professor!' cried Laurence. 'I had clean forgotten the Professor. I should have told you, Sir, long ago, that on the steamer I made the acquaintance of a nephew of yours—one Sylvester Indagine.'

'My father's name was Sylvester. But—my late brother?' he held the letter unopened in his hand—'my late brother? and my nephew?'

'One of the Professor's purposes in coming to England,' Laurence went on, 'was, he told me, to repair if possible some wrong. But I quite forgot him. Where is Professor Indagine?'

'He employed us to search for Mr. Clement Indagine. For a long time we were unable to hear anything about him, and then the Professor was obliged to return to America. We learned his place of residence yesterday by a kind of accident through a certain Barrister's clerk, Cottle by name.'

'I am bewildered,' said the Poet. 'You bring me a letter from my brother who has been lost to me for five-and-thirty years—you tell me he is dead: you speak of a nephew in search

of me—actually in search of me and unable to find me—Me. And you go on to say that your Firm—a Firm of solicitors in Lincoln's Inn—has also been in search of me, and that you have been able to hear nothing of me—nothing—nothing—of *Me*! This is wonderful!'

'The Saturday Reviewer, remember, Laurence made haste to remind him, 'was in just the same position. "Where," he asked, "is Clement Indagine?"'

'True—true.' The ruffled Poet was easily smoothed. 'These lawyers, you would say, knew my name and fame, naturally—everybody knew that, but they could not learn my residence. I say, Sir,' he turned to the Representative, 'that you asked yourselves not—who was Clement Indagine, but where was Clement Indagine.'

The young gentleman who brought the letter began to understand that there are many things of which even a passed solicitor may be ignorant: he had suspected this before, in moments of depression: as, for instance, the name and fame of Mr. Clement Indagine. But he smiled and looked foolish, and because he felt that he looked foolish, he blushed and looked more foolish still.

'Had you not better proceed to read the letter?' said Laurence.

'Yes—yes. Is this the letter?' Mr. Indagine looked at it doubtfully. 'It is a voice from the tomb. My brother, who is dead, is about to speak to me.' He looked as if he was not anxious to hear this voice from the tomb. Well. Few people are. 'My brother,' he went on, turning the letter about, but not opening it, 'left us five-and-thirty years ago. This letter, my friend, is going to revive the memory of a wretched time, a miserable time, a time which I had thought was long since buried, never even to be spoken of or thought of. We had a miserable childhood, and a miserable upgrowing. We were Children of a Prison—and our gaoler was our own uncle—whose name I cannot bear to pronounce.' He trembled with agitation. 'I say, wretched memory—I cannot bear to open the letter. No—I cannot. Read it for me, my friend. No—better not. Call Althea, if you please. She shall read the letter to me.' The name of his brother and the letter which he held in his hand recalled the Queen's Bench to his mind and the days when he spent the mornings at his desk in the Row among the books and his evenings with his father and brother in the Prison. 'Althea, child, read this letter for me. Read it aloud and let us get it over. It is from your uncle, who is dead. I do not know whether he did well or whether he failed. He went away years ago, and we have never once heard from him. Read it, my dear.' He leaned his head upon his hand, expect-

ing to be taken forcibly back to those days which he would so willingly have forgotten. Althea opened the letter and read it.

'My dear Brother,—I am told that I am dying. During the long years since we parted I have always looked forward to getting home and to seeing you again. This will never happen —and I shall go to my long home without that happiness. I ought to have written many a year ago, but I have led so busy a life that I put it off from time to time until it seemed too late. I have been very busy and very prosperous, because I had the good luck to come straight out West.

'Before I die there is a small thing on my mind. I say a small thing, but I do not know. It may have proved a very great thing. If mischief has come of it I am sorry. It is this. When I made up my mind that the only thing I could do was to run clean away and so get out of the difficulties which I still believe were caused by our dear uncle for his own purposes, I thought I would play him a certain trick which would be likely to cause him annoyance and trouble. Therefore before I left Backler's office I opened the tin box containing Mr. Norbery's papers; I took them all out, tied them up, and brought them along with me.

'Well; I tossed them into my trunk and they came to America with me—and then, after awhile, when I settled down here and began to get work I forgot all about them. Mind, I fully meant to send them back. But I quite forgot. I fear that their loss may have caused more than annoyance. However it is now too late to do anything more than send them back. I suppose my uncle can hardly be living still: but you can give the papers to his executors. As for me I have not opened the parcel and I have no knowledge of its contents. My son will take it to England and will place it, just as I brought it away, in your hands. He will also tell you everything about me, but when you get the letter I shall be lying in the cemetery.

'I hope, my dear Clement, that you are well, prosperous and happy. My son will be wealthy, and you must use him freely if you are in any want or trouble. Farewell. 'Æneas.'

Mr. Indagine lifted his head with a sigh, as one who has listened to a prayer.

'I thought it would have been worse,' he said. 'Poor Æneas! So he is dead. I should like to see his son. Perhaps he will come again. Not a word about the old memories. Like me, Æneas would not willingly recall them. Write to your American cousin, Althea, and tell him all that has happened. Perhaps he does not even know that the English Poet who bears his surname is actually his father's brother. When the new volume comes out he shall have a copy.'

'Here are the papers spoken of in the letter,' said the young solicitor, opening his bag and taking them out.

'The papers? Oh! yes—well—I have nothing to do with my uncle's property. I refuse to receive any papers.' Mr. Indagine, so to speak, brushed them aside.

'We understand, on inquiry, that the Treasury has taken possession of the Norbery estates. Do you wish us to communicate these documents to the Treasury?'

'My dear Sir, you will do exactly as you please. I have no interest whatever in the business. My brother's foolish action cannot have made any difference. Of what consequence is the loss of a few papers? And if any action has to be taken I shall not take it.'

The lawyer looked with pity upon a man who thought that the loss of a few papers could be of no consequence.

'Well, Sir, we opened the packet at the request of the Professor, and we found in it a will, which, considering that Mr. Norbery was supposed to die intestate, may prove of very great importance indeed.'

'Well, Sir, do what you please with it. It is no concern of mine.'

'We understand that the property in question is very large.'

'Oh!' cried Mr. Indagine with impatience. 'Shall I never hear the end of that accursed Property? Take away your will—Tear it up—Take it away, I say. Do what you like with it,' he repeated irritably.

'My dear Sir—Tear it up? Tear up a legal document?'

'My father,' Althea explained, gently, 'means that he can never consent to take, by will or otherwise, any portion of that estate.'

'No portion. None,' said Mr. Indagine, with vehemence. 'Take it away. The sight of the thing with the knowledge of what it represents irritates me. Take it out of my sight.'

Then Laurence remembered a certain passage in his mother's letter of instructions.

'Can you tell us briefly,' he said, 'the disposition of the estate by the will?'

'Certainly. The will leaves the whole of the estate absolutely to one Lucy Holford, then the Testator's housekeeper.'

'Oh!' It was Althea who started, remembering what Laurence had told her.

'And it names one Vicesimus Cottle of Bank Side as sole executor.'

Then this was the will spoken of by his mother.

'To Lucy Holford,' Mr. Indagine said with a sigh of relief. 'And nothing at all to me. Ah! That is exactly as it should be. My uncle had so much grace at the end. He spared me

the last insult of bequeathing me my father's property which he had stolen: that was well done of him. Some men would have pretended to atone by leaving money to their victims. He did not. Althea, my dear, henceforth no one can say that we are in the least interested in this abominable estate. No man can ask me why I would make no movement in the matter. Young gentleman, you may now tie up all those papers again and take them away. I refuse to receive them. With Mr. Norbery living or dead I will have no dealings whatever.'

'Well, but,' said the young lawyer, 'this is a matter of very great importance: you would not keep anybody out of his rights. Will you at least tell me what you can of the persons named?'

'So far, I will help you. The Executor, Mr. Vicesimus Cottle, has been dead for twenty years. Lucy Holford, I heard, went away, but I cannot tell you anything more. She was a niece of that clerk Lucius Cottle who gave you my place of residence. There were two sisters, Lucy and Florry. They were pretty girls: my brother Æneas and Florry, I remember, were once supposed—but that is boy and girl story. The girls were quite poor and they were very pretty—and—well, Sir, I am sorry to say that I cannot tell you more. Their cousin, Mr. Lucius Cottle, may give you further information about this heiress. I refer you to him; and now I wish you good morning, young gentleman.'

Althea looked at Laurence—Would he speak? But he preserved a countenance unmoved. The Sphynx herself looks not upon the short-lived generations with an expression of less interest.

'Then,' said the solicitor, 'I suppose I had better take away the papers.'

Whilst he was folding them up, steps and voices were heard without. The door opened and Oliver appeared. Behind him stood Mr. Mayes. He was then in the midst of his electric treatment and his diet. Enforced exercise and total abstinence had made him both pale and thin. Also, his natural anxiety about the obstruction of the Motor path, which seemed resolved to yield to no severities, the awful expense of the treatment, and the physical sufferings which he endured, naturally made him irritable.

'You here, Oliver?' cried Mr. Indagine. 'Wait a minute, my dear boy—we have just completed the business. But why are you here, Sir?' he addressed Mr. Mayes. 'I thought you understood——'

'I have brought him,' said Oliver. 'I will explain why, directly. It is a business connected with the Norbery Estate.'

'Good Heavens! We have just finished that business. Take him away, Oliver—take him and his business too, out of my sight.'

'But it concerns Althea,' said Oliver.

'No—no—no—nobody here is concerned at all. My uncle left his property to his housekeeper, Lucy Holford. The will has been found.'

'To his housekeeper—to Lucy Holford?' Oliver turned pale.

'Here is the will,' said the solicitor. 'Perhaps you will be able to give us some information respecting that lady.'

Oliver snatched the will and looked at the date. Then he laughed gently and laid it down upon the table.

'It bears your signature, Mayes,' he said. 'And it is thirty years old.'

'Lord!' Mr. Mayes ejaculated. 'So it is—my signature! Yes—Yes, Yes—I remember witnessing that Will very well. Where in the world was it found?'

'You remember witnessing that will?' Laurence asked.

'I remember it as well as—as well as——'

'Witnessing the other,' suggested Oliver, sharply.

'Yes—yes—oh, yes.' It was perhaps the Treatment which made him turn so white and tremble at the knees. Perhaps it was the contrast between the clear recollection of the one, and the blank space in his mind where the second event should have been photographed indelibly. 'I remember the day very well and everything he said. It was a hot day in summer.'

'Well,' said Oliver, 'that only wastes time. You have brought with you a document which sets this will aside.'

Mr. Mayes drew a paper out of his pocket and laid it upon the table without speaking.

'What is this?' asked the solicitor.

'Another and a later will.'

'This is very wonderful. Two wills, and both to turn up on the same day?'

'I know nothing about any earlier paper,' said Oliver. 'What Mr. Mayes has is a document found a day or two ago by his clerk among some old papers. I have asked Mr. Mayes to bring it here, and I have come with him, first because I am—indirectly—concerned with the will, and next because Mr. Mayes fancied there might be some prejudice.'

'Misunderstanding,' said Mr. Mayes. 'Parties not being always business men.'

'Oliver,' said Mr. Indagine, 'if that Will leaves me anything——'

'It doesn't.'

'Then I am not concerned with it. Take it away.'

'But this is interesting,' said Laurence. A second time he experienced that very odd sensation of having the cup snatched from his lips. 'This is very interesting indeed.'

'I don't know how it concerns you,' said Oliver, rudely.

'Nevertheless, it is interesting.'

'Well, then,' Mr. Mayes explained, 'it's all left to the young lady there, provided she changes her name by a certain time, and if she doesn't, then to Mr. Luttrel here. Seems as if the old gentleman couldn't abide the name of Indagine. Made money, perhaps by some of the family, which naturally set him agen the rest.'

'That, you see, is the position,' said Oliver. 'As for myself, Althea——'

'You have heard what my father said, Oliver. We can have nothing to do with Mr. Norbery's will.'

'Well, Althea, considering everything—' Oliver glanced at Laurence, 'considering all that has passed—it matters nothing in the long run. Though I would rather that my wife——'

'Your wife, Oliver?' She faced him with steady eyes which he could not meet. 'Your wife?'

'My wife, I said, should have her own property to herself. Still as I shall have it, there will be no difference.'

'Your wife, Oliver?' she repeated with no change in her colour, but still the steady determined eyes.

'Come, Althea——'

'Your wife, Oliver?' she repeated a third time.

'There was a promise,' he replied, dropping his own eyes.

'What promise? Repeat that promise.'

Oliver was silent. But he seemed to grow smaller—and the old ugly look fell upon him.

'You understand me, perfectly, Oliver. You know, perfectly, what was said on that occasion. What is the meaning of this new pretence?'

'Pretence or not, what does it matter?' he replied, doggedly. 'If you will not profit by the will, I shall. That is the situation. If you choose to remain poor, I shall not. You cannot blame me, Althea.'

'I do not blame you, Oliver. You will do as you please.'

'Good Heavens!' cried the exasperated poet, 'you drive me mad with your Wills and your conditions. Go away all of you. Oliver, take away this person who came the other day to sell the secret of his precious Will. Wanted a commission or a percentage for handing it over. Let this person understand that he will get nothing from me. Do exactly what you like all of you. But never speak to me again about the Norbery Estate.'

Laurence, meanwhile, had been looking at the latest of the two wills.

'It seems a very intelligible document,' he said. 'The man had, I suppose, no other relation but yourself, Mr. Indagine, and he seems to have hated you. Mr. Mayes, whose knowledge of human nature does him great credit, has supplied the motive. Mr. Norbery made money, perhaps by sharp practices, out of your family. We naturally hate those whom we have injured. So he left it all to your daughter, not to you, and to her only on condition that she should not bear the name which he hated. This kind of hatred makes one think better of humanity. It seems to show the existence of conscience. Perhaps Mr. Mayes understands the passion.'

Mr. Mayes was heard to murmur something about fine words in connection with Australia.

'I quite agree with Mr. Waller,' said Oliver. 'The document is perfectly natural and reasonable. And as for my name being there, it was put in because it was necessary to put in some one in case of the condition being unfulfilled.'

'Quite so,' said Laurence, folding up the paper. 'We may congratulate you, Mr. Luttrel. When the necessary formalities are completed—I suppose that the thing is all right—you will be able to have many more little dinners at the Star and Garter.'

'What do you mean by that?' Oliver asked quickly,

'Really—what I said—nothing more. We saw you the other day with your friends: you seemed a cheerful company. And strictly scientific. Here is the will.' As he was handing it over, his eye was caught by something. 'Stay,' he said. 'Here is some writing.' He looked more closely. 'It is a very small, fine writing, apparently later than the body of the will—in fresher ink—it looks like a foreign language—well, I cannot read it, and I suppose that it doesn't matter. There, Mr. Mayes; you did find something after all.'

'It is a most extraordinary thing,' the Solicitor remarked, professionally. 'The estate of the Intestate long since taken over by the Treasury; a very large estate; and two wills actually turning up on the same day! It is truly wonderful.'

'Well, gentlemen,' said Mr. Indagine, settling himself in his chair again, 'you have wasted an hour of my valuable time. I wish you all good morning. Go and talk about it outside.'

He plunged into his papers and became immediately absorbed.

Oliver lingered behind. Laurence retired discreetly to the window.

'Althea,' said Oliver with sweetness. 'I knew your feeling about myself, all along. I wished above all things to do what would please—' he pointed to her father bent over his desk. 'Therefore I willingly deceived myself. As for what I said just now, I was prompted by the desire to bring matters to a head—

to set you free if you wished it, even from that conditional understanding. Well—you are free, and I am free. As for your refusal, I say it is Quixotic, Althea. Nothing less.'

'It is my father's wish, Oliver. That is enough.'

'Well. But you must not think the worse of me if I profit by this wonderful windfall?'

'Surely, not. You will act exactly as you think is best and right.'

'Thank you, Althea. The difference between nothing a year and a large income is for a scientific man incalculable. I shall now command my own Laboratory—I shall multiply my work by ten. I shall conduct Research by means of others—Oh! you cannot understand, Althea.'

For a moment he looked again the old Oliver, eager and athirst for science. Althea forgot, while he spoke, his cruel desertion of Cassie.

'Tell my father,' he went on. 'Let him understand that through your sacrifice,—yours, Althea—I am going to become rich—independent, my own master—and—and—. Good-bye, Althea.'

He touched her fingers—the last time that he was ever to touch her fingers—and was gone.

Then the voice of Claudia seemed to fall upon Althea's ear. Again she heard the sentence, stern and certain.

'The young man shall be surely punished.'

'Don't let us waste our time any longer, Althea,' said the Poet. 'That business is dispatched, thank Heaven. Mr. Waller and I have a great deal to do. We are now, Mr. Waller, arrived at the poems which open the Third Period. Sit down, my friend. I think a note on the characteristics of this period —— Oh! shall I never hear the end of that abominable Estate? Can I never escape from the memory of the Prison?'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

'OUR COUSIN.'

A Proper Spirit, the resentment of 'behaviour,' a Becoming Pride, the knowledge of what is due to oneself and to the Family, jealousy of rights, and the assertion of proper station, rank or respectability—these things, though not necessarily virtues in themselves, are attributes of a certain Virtue which has been hitherto unnamed by moralists. This Virtue is conspicuously

illustrated in the great and powerful Lower Middle Class; where it is the cause, unhappily—though so great a Virtue—of many family feuds, entered upon with becoming pride and persevered in with the obstinacy due to self-respect. It is less often found among the working men; it is unknown in the Upper Ten Thousand, who perhaps have other virtues of their own, to make up. It was this virtue, with its attendant nymphs of Pride, Resentment, and Suspicion, which separated Claudia and Cornelia for eighteen long years. How the little rift began which widened to so great a fissure, I know not. There was once a tradition among the girls concerning a forgotten postage-stamp, but this may surely be disregarded. Suffice it to say that for eighteen years Cornelia owed a Call. This simple fact should be enough. She owed a Call, and she did not pay it. Therefore, for eighteen years the Sisters never met.

Imagine, therefore, the astonishment of the Family Circle, when Claudia unexpectedly ignored the Call so long due and visited her brother and sister and her nieces at the Family Home, the Cradle of the Race.

She came without sending word to prepare their minds. She suddenly opened the door and stood before them, smiling pleasantly, dressed in her silk and lace, her gold chain about her neck, a dignified and gracious lady.

'Cornelia,' she said, 'I hope you are very well—Lucius, how do you do?' That was all: not a word of explanation or regret: only she smiled and walked in.

'Aunt Claudia!' cried Flavia—'Oh!'

'Sister Claudia!' cried Cornelia, springing to her feet.

'Claudia!' cried Lucius. 'Is it possible?'

'Quite possible,' she replied exchanging with her sister the kiss of reconciliation, which was not a long and lingering kiss, but a birdlike peck. 'Quite possible, Lucius. Perhaps our long separation has been partly my fault.'

Cornelia sat down. She recovered quickly from her surprise and was herself again. She folded her hands in her lap sitting bolt upright.

'Perhaps your fault,' she echoed. 'As for me I have long forgiven you, sister. That was my duty. Though if anyone——'

'Claudia,' Lucius hastened to stop the danger of explanation. 'We rejoice to see you once more. You are looking well and younger than we might have expected—I'm sure—when we consider the wear and tear of your life. Prophecy is said to age people rapidly. This is my boy Sempronius—this is Cassie, and Flavia you know.'

'It is comfortable,' said Claudia, sitting down and smoothing her skirts, 'to be with one's own people again. We go out into

the world and do what we are called and chosen to do. But there is nothing like the old house after all. You've changed nothing,' she looked round the room. 'It is all as I remember it. As for what you are doing, Flavia gives me all the news, so that I know everything and you need not explain.'

'A long time ago,' Cornelia began again, 'I resolved that it was my duty to forgive, and I have endeavoured to forget, though from one's own sister——'

'Nay, Cornelia—' said Lucius, 'on this occasion we will have none but pleasant memories. Your little Chapel, Claudia?' he asked with the condescension of an Anglican, 'It still keeps up, I hope; and the attendance—and the collections—show no falling off?'

'The Truth cannot fall off, brother, though members may come and go. And you, Cornelia, remain still in your old place—in the Church?'

'I am still at the post of duty. As I was saying, sister——'

'We are all,' Lucius interposed for the third time, 'at the post of duty. Though unhappily one may be at his post and yet out of his place—out of his place. Post and Place do not, as in Cornelia's case, always go together. At the present moment, we are mostly out of place.'

'So I learn. The Family,' Claudia glanced, perhaps accidentally, at her sister's stuff dress and again smoothed her soft silk draperies, 'has not got on very well, except myself. Not that I take credit for my own gifts. Heaven forbid! If you stay at home and look for plums to drop into your mouth you can't expect to get on. Father did much the same with his Academy. Well—my son Felix is going to Australia. He goes out with Laurence Waller.'

'With Mr. Waller?'

'You call him Mr. Waller. Yes. For the present. Well!' again she looked round the old familiar room. 'Everything just the same. Oh! Cornelia, if you lived a thousand years you would keep everything just the same. There is grandfather's portrait and the samplers and the punchbowl and the silver candlesticks. If you had become a flourishing man, Lucius, I suppose that all would have been changed and the very house given up.'

'Give up the old house, Claudia? Never.'

'Well: it is pleasant to look round and remember the old times—and two girls and a boy again, who might be Cornelia and you, Lucius, and I. But there are changes coming.'

'What changes?'

Claudia paused. The pause made her reply more impressive. 'There are going to be many changes,' she said—'many and important changes. That is partly why I am here to-night.'

'I am ignorant of any changes,' said Lucius; 'what changes should there be?'

'You will soon be in ignorance no longer. When changes are hanging over a Family it is right that all should be united. Therefore, I am here. No more explanations, Cornelia, if you please. We are united once more. That is enough.'

She spoke with authority though Cornelia was her elder, and she assumed her prophetic manner and her voice became deeper and the smile left her face, and her eyes lost their sympathy.

Then awe fell upon those who heard her, even upon Cornelia herself, who had thought never to be awed by a younger sister and the Prophet of a Dissenting Chapel.

'There will be changes,' she repeated. 'Those who have been lost to us will be restored. Those whom we thought dead will be alive: we shall gain but we shall lose: there will be separations: the past will be destroyed, yet we shall be preserved. Everything that we now look upon will be dispersed. Yet a week or two and we shall be regarding the world with changed eyes. Therefore I am here, to warn you and to share with you: to take counsel with you and to give it.'

'It's terrible,' whispered Flavia. 'She knows everything. Father, ask her for more. She can tell all that is going to happen.' But Lucius, who was now pale and trembling, wriggled in his chair. To be in search of a place puts a man at a disadvantage in presence of a Prophetess. She might, for instance, announce that he would never find one.

'Why,' said Cornelia, 'as for that, anybody can say that things are going to happen. While I sit in the empty Church I see what is going to happen as plain as if it was written upon the wall in letters of gold like the Commandments. I know what will happen very well if Lucius and Cassie don't find work to do after Mr. Waller, who's our chief support, goes away. When we lose his five-and-thirty shillings a week where shall we be? Can you tell more, Claudia? But in my Church they don't call me a Prophetess.'

'I tell you again, that there will be great changes. A change for you, Lucius: a change for Flavia: a change for Cassie: a change for Sempronius—a change for Althea and for her father: a change for all. For you and me, Cornelia, loss and separation.'

'Isn't she wonderful?' cried Flavia.

'Enough of warning,' Claudia looked round smiling again. 'I have come for other things. I bring you a message. It is from Laurence Waller, who is coming himself in a few minutes. I promised to save him the trouble of explaining.'

'Is he actually going, then?' cried Flavia. 'Oh! what shall we do?'

'He is not going just yet. But he wishes me to tell you——'

'He ought to give a fortnight's notice,' said Cornelia.

'He wishes me to tell you——'

'Nay,' said Lucius. 'He has been a great happiness to us. He shall come and go as he pleases. As for the money, I shall find another berth, no doubt, unless Claudia prophesies against it.'

'He wishes me to tell you,' resumed Claudia, 'what he might have told you at the outset, only, I suppose, it seemed romantic to be here in disguise. He did not let you know who he really is—in fact, he is no other——'

'He is the son of Cousin Lucy,' cried Cornelia sitting up triumphantly. 'I always knew it. Lucius, you will bear witness that I always said it!'

'You did, Cornelia, you certainly did.'

'Lucy's voice, Lucy's eyes. I always said it. And now I do hope we shall hear no more nonsense about his father being a nobleman. And perhaps we shall find out where he gets the money that he flings about as if he had the whole Bank at his back, taking girls to theatres and giving them champagne and gold watches, and turning their foolish heads. And perhaps he will tell us now what he does for his living and where his mother works.'

Claudia laughed pleasantly.

'My dear Cornelia, you are too quick. His father has been knighted and is now Sir David Waller. Therefore, though it is wonderful to think of, Cousin Lucy is Lady Waller, and they are very rich indeed. They have got cattle stations, sheep runs, houses, and all kinds of things—Lucy has her carriages and her gardens, and is now a very great lady.'

'Oh! Very well.' Cornelia sniffed gently. 'And she once a daily dressmaker! But to me she will always be plain Lucy.'

'Laurence came here at his mother's request in order to find out the present circumstances of the Family. I always did say that Lucy had the best heart in the world, though after the way we behaved to her—there, Cornelia, we won't go into that. Well, she married a boat-builder at Rotherhithe when she left our brother-in-law——'

'A boat-builder!' Cornelia breathed again. 'Dear me! only a boat-builder! Was that all? And after coming to the Academy every Sunday afternoon for tea! But to be sure the poor girl had no choice.'

'Then his affairs went wrong and they emigrated, and everything has prospered with them since.'

'Why, children,' Lucius leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs, 'this should make us all proud and joyful: Mr. Waller,

whom we will now call Laurence—which I think he will not take ill—is our cousin. He has heaped kindnesses upon us——'

'He gave me a sovereign,' said Sempronius.

'Oh!' Flavia sighed, 'I always knew there must be some reason for it.'

'And he is our cousin. Cornelia, it matters nothing that Lucy was once a daily dressmaker. Cease to dwell upon that memory. Besides, the Family should agree to forget these little details, which are not dishonourable, certainly, yet not a cause of pride. She is now rich and a great credit to all of us. Her Ladyship confers lustre upon us. Let us welcome Laurence by saying kind things about his mother.'

'For my own part, I shall write to Lucy,' said Claudia, 'by this week's mail. But Laurence had another task imposed upon him. He was to find out, if he could, what has become of Florry——'

'Ah!' said Lucius, 'there was Florry. I wonder if she also has been raised to the rank of nobility. I wonder, now, if Florry is another subject of pride for the Family?'

'Not before the children, sister,' Cornelia whispered. There was a sudden hardening of her face, and her lips tightened, symptoms which Claudia marked.

'Why not before the girls? Do you think, Cornelia, that Laurence will perhaps find her?'

'I cannot say.'

'Do you think you could help him to find her?'

'How should I know anything about her?'

'She was so very sweet and pretty,' Claudia went on, softly murmuring, as if out of the fulness of her heart. 'I always loved Florry, but Julia's favourite was Lucy. I wonder where she went and how she fares. Sometimes I think she may have fallen into poverty.'

'That is very possible,' said Lucius. He was not clever, but he understood that in this talk about Florry there was more than met his ear. Also he saw that Cornelia was disquieted, and that Claudia watched her. 'It is very possible,' he repeated, 'they were terribly poor.'

'When people succeed,' Claudia continued speaking, almost as if she were quoting the words of her father, the wise man, 'their friends for the most part find them out if it is only to borrow money of them. If they fail their friends cease to search for them, or if they find them, they hide them away and keep them hidden—and then—oh! children—children!' she turned to the two girls, 'poverty is the greatest temptation that can fall in the way of man or woman. Pray, pray to be guarded against this temptation; pray with all your soul and with all your strength for the daily bread. Poverty causes sins innumerable;

poverty destroys honour and self-respect. When the wretched creatures begin to sink lower they think to stay their fall by sin and crime. Poverty fills our prisons: poverty turns honesty into crime and virtue into dishonour. It is a terrible thing, indeed, to fall into poverty. Children'—her voice sank into a significant whisper, 'should one such poor creature, after long suffering and the punishment which always awaits the transgressor, be found by one who loves her still and be drawn up out of the dreadful pit, there is nothing left for us—oh! there is nothing left for us but forgiveness and love and silence among ourselves—yes—and silence.'

'She might be forgiven,' said Cornelia, 'but she should be kept out of sight.'

The two girls listened with awe and fear. Something was certainly going to happen.

'No,' said Claudia, 'she must be forgiven altogether and in silence. Such, Children, is the teaching of the Early Church.'

'I hope,' said Cornelia severely, 'that I may be allowed to know the doctrines of the Church as well as you, sister. It is our duty, we are told, to forgive the wicked man when he turneth away from his wickedness. But as for receiving him in silence——'

At this point she stopped and her face became frozen. The sudden freezing of a face can only be produced by astonishment, which at the same time fixes the eyes and deprives the sufferer of the power of utterance.

For the door was thrown open and there entered Laurence.—With him a lady—a lady in whom Cornelia recognised none other than Florry herself, of whom they had been speaking. Afterwards she understood, and knew how to resent in a becoming manner, the artfulness of her sister in preparing the way for the reception of the prodigal.

But what Cornelia looked upon was Florry transformed. No longer the ragged, starving, miserable creature, wan and hollow-eyed, who dragged her way along the street and picked up crusts. Florry dressed like a lady, wearing pretty things that cost money, like the wife of a clergyman or of the general practitioner, or of the eminent grocer—but not so fine. Florry in gloves and a bonnet that must have cost—but of course her nephew paid for all: some people have no shame about taking presents. Florry who seemed to have gone back twenty years. Her cheeks, which flamed, gave her some of her former beauty: her soft eyes, limpid eyes which looked once round the room and then dropped, were as sweet as ever. Florry—no longer in concealment but brought back after all to the old house—even to the Sanctuary of the Academy, the Holy Place of the Family. She held her

nephew's hand, and stood with drooping head. But he stood upright and confident and masterful.

'My dear cousins,' he said, 'Claudia has explained things, I hope—I am your unworthy cousin. That is all, and I bring back to you another cousin—my Aunt Florry who has been separated from you a great while.—We have found her at last and we never mean to let her go again. Never—never.'

He drew her gently and kissed her on the forehead before them all. It was not only the kiss of affection, but the sounding of a trumpet. Cornelia understood. It meant that Florry was to be received, with himself: it was meant for her private ear; it condemned her to silence about the past. She gasped, and for a while sat irresolute.

But Claudia snatched her cousin from Laurence's arms.

'Florry, dear!—Oh! you remember me very well, I am sure, I am Claudia, my dear, though I am old and changed. But you are still pretty. Oh! my dear, how long since we have seen you! Now we have found you again we shall never let you go, never, mind—no—not until the Angel of the Lord calls you and brings the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the Saints. Florry—do not cry, Florry, you are with your own people at last, and across the sea, your sister stretches her hand to welcome you back with love and kisses. My dear, this is a happy evening. Lucius, have you forgotten Florry? Cornelia, have you neither eyes nor ears? Children, this is our cousin, our cousin Florry Holford.'

Cornelia rose, her mind resolved. She assumed the frigid air of condescension with which in the old days she had been wont to receive her poor relations on Sunday Afternoon.

'Cousin,' she said coldly extending her fingers. 'It is long since you came here last. Much has happened. You have doubtless a great deal to tell us when we have time. Will you sit down? Give your cousin a chair, Flavia.'

'You mean it, Cornelia?' Florry asked timidly.

'Sit down. You are at home. With your own people.' Cornelia answered in jerks, as if each syllable was an effort. 'Perhaps we shall learn, in good time, your name. Your *married* name,' she added with emphasis.

'I am called—they called me—Sinclair.'

'Oh! Sinclair,' Cornelia pronounced the name as if between Cottle and Sinclair there was indeed a gulf. 'Is your husband living?'

'He is—he is—' she caught the stern rebuke in Cornelia's eyes and dropped her own. 'He is dead.'

'You are living near here?'

'Laurence has found me a lodging in Mansell Street, near the Tower.'

'You are a widow. You have dropped your widow's weeds—So has Claudia. I judge nobody. But mine I wear until my dying day.'

Flavia and Cassie, standing spectators, held their breath. What did this mean?

'She said that such an one should be received with love and silence,' whispered Flavia, 'she never says anything without a meaning.'

'Cousin Florry,' said Lucius, 'you are welcome. There are my daughters Flavia and Cassie. This is my son. You are indeed welcome, for the sake of old times and your sister, now Lady Waller.'

'Cousin Laurence,' said Cornelia, 'I saw all along that you were Lucy's child. This should be a joyful evening to us.' She smiled, but it was one of those smiles which some sculptors delineate on marble faces—muscularly correct, yet with no gladness in them. 'I do not know whether the news that you are indeed our cousin, or whether the recovery of Florry should give us the greater joy. I hope, Florry, that your last letters from Lucy, her ladyship, were satisfactory. You will tell her of this happy meeting and give her our united loves. When she knows all—all—she will be—yes—she will be joyful indeed.'

The girls wondered. Their Aunt Cornelia was always candour itself, she disguised nothing and concealed nothing. By keeping the plain truth before her nieces she had done much to prevent the growth of conceit. Now, however, she was manifest to all, as playing a part, and playing it both unwillingly and badly.

But Claudia understood. The Honour of the Family demanded this sacrifice; that, before everything. And because Florry herself could not but feel the constraint and make-believe, she sat beside her cooing and murmuring, pressing her hand and whispering over and over again soft words of kindness and welcome, while Cornelia, her formal welcome completed, sat upright with her set smile upon her lips.

'We now understand, Cousin Laurence,' said Lucius, 'why you came to us, and why you have stayed here, and why you have heaped so many kindnesses on our heads. It was for your mother's sake. You will tell her, when you write, that we have not forgotten her, nor the old days when she came to enjoy my father's conversation on Sunday Afternoon. Perhaps his wisdom may have helped her upward flight. Tell her that we rejoice unfeignedly—say unfeignedly, lest she should think that there is a single grain of envy in any of us—I say a grain'—he turned his back on Cornelia in order to show everybody that he meant no reflection upon her, 'one single grain of envy in any of our

hearts. No: we are proud of her rise to fortune and distinction, She adds another name to Bank Side. With those of Shakepeare, Marlowe, Massinger, Vicesimus Cottle and Clement Indagine, the historians will henceforth couple that of Lucy, Lady Waller.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

'WARNED OFF.'

'I WISH,' Laurence grumbled, 'that somebody else had this office. Felix would have enjoyed it. There's a sad want of personal consideration about Prophets.'

He was holding in his hand a letter from Claudia.

'Go at once,' she said. 'There is no time to be lost. See the young man Oliver Luttrel and give him, from me, a final warning. Give it in these words. "Desist immediately. A danger of which you suspect nothing hangs over your head. Desist immediately. There is yet time." If he be still obdurate, he must take the consequences.'

'I don't half like it,' Laurence repeated. 'Felix ought to have been sent.'

For one young man to warn another ought to be an easy thing to do, because one should always be ready to speak up in the cause of virtue. But it is a proceeding which doth always somewhat smack of the Prig. For the professional admonitor, the preacher and teacher by trade, it is without doubt a very easy thing. He is always wagging that forefinger. Nay, some members of the profession are never really happy unless they are brandishing it in the face of a sinner.

Laurence did not like it at all, but still he obeyed and carried the job through. In the discharge of his duty, therefore, he called upon the Demonstrator of Physics at his Laboratory in the City College. The long students' room was empty: none of the men were working at the tables; vacation absolute reigns in September; and the footsteps echoed loudly as Laurence walked down the room towards the Lecture Hall.

Oliver was in his private room and came out.

'You?' he asked with surprise and small show of cordiality.

'Yes, can I have a few words with you?'

'We can talk here. There are no students.'

Through the open door of the private room, Laurence saw that there was another visitor half sitting, half leaning upon the table—with a cigar of the largest kind between his lips. He

recognised the man as the swaggering blustering talker of the Richmond dinner.

'I have been asked to speak to you—to deliver a message.'

'Oh!' Oliver assumed that he came from Cassie and hardened his heart.

'I am told that the message is of the highest importance, but I have not been informed why.'

'You are mysterious.'

'When I tell you that I am a cousin of Miss Cassandra Cottle, you will understand that I do not visit you out of any friendliness.'

'You a cousin of Cassie's?'

Laurence inclined his head.

'Since you are Cassie's cousin,' said Oliver, 'you are entitled to an explanation. I was not aware of the relationship. I suppose you have heard what has happened. It is true that we were engaged. It is also true that it was a perfectly foolish engagement for two people with no money at all. Nothing could have come of it. When I quite understood that it was foolish and impossible I broke it off. That was really kinder than keeping it on.'

'You also swore to—to others—that there had been nothing of the kind.'

'That was in order to protect the young lady. And it was at her own request. Do you blame me, I ask, because I did what I could to save a girl from the prejudice which sometimes attaches to one who has had an engagement broken off?'

'You are doubtless extremely considerate.' Indeed, his manner was that of one who had weighed the matter very carefully. 'However, I am come on the part of Mrs. Laverock.'

'Of Mrs. Laverock? The Prophet person? What have I got to do with that woman? Am I a member of her humbugging Community?'

'A little respect if you please, Mr. Luttrel, for my cousin.'

'Oh! respect—respect,' he repeated losing his temper. 'As much as you like, Mr. Waller, if that is your real name. I deeply respect all your cousins—the clerk and the pew-opener and the telegraph girl and all. And now will you please to go on with your precious message?'

Just then the gentleman in the private room came sauntering out, his hands in his pockets, rolling his shoulders, and stood behind Oliver, as if to protect him.

'My message is a warning.'

'A warning?' Oliver laughed, but he turned curiously white and the odd ugly look fell upon his face. 'To warn me—me? Mrs. Laverock is good enough to warn me?—Indeed!—To repent and be converted and to join the Early Church?'

'To warn a gentleman,' said Mr. Harry Stanley with a roll of the shoulder that placed himself offensively close to Laurence. 'I say to warn a gentleman seems to me a thing that wants explanation. I've seen a man warned off a racecourse, and another man warned not to turn up the King, and I've seen a man warned by the Beak; but hang me if ever I saw the man take his warning in a friendly spirit. Explain what you mean, Sir, whoever you are. What the Devil do you mean by threatening a gentleman? Explain, Sir,' he added with a fine but common phrase used for the strengthening of speech, 'or we'll know the reason why.'

Laurence looked at him slowly from head to foot. To be thus deliberately estimated makes a man angry. But the Australian was a good deal bigger than Mr. Stanley, and was apparently not in the least afraid.

'As for you,' he replied, 'I have no warning for you and I know nothing about you. Your appearance is not scientific, and I should say you would be more at home on a racecourse or in a billiard-room than in a Laboratory. But, my swaggering friend, if you think to bustle me I shall take it fighting.'

'Well,' said Mr. Stanley falling back, 'it's no funeral of mine. But I'll stand by and see fair play.'

'You were so good as to promise me a warning,' said Oliver.

'I will read you the words contained in my letter.' Laurence drew it from his pocket and opened it. 'Shall I read it in presence of this—this third person? or shall I communicate it to your private ear? I would advise the latter course, but of course it shall be exactly as you please.'

'I have no secrets from my friend. Read it.'

'Very good. Mrs. Laverock begs me to use these words—I read them from her letter—"Desist immediately. A danger of which you suspect nothing hangs over your head. Desist immediately. There is yet time." That is my message, Mr. Luttrel. I know nothing of what it means. But it does look a little like being warned off the course.' He turned to Mr. Stanley. 'Have you any further remark to make, Sir?'

'Nothing,' Mr. Stanley replied. 'It's no fight of mine. If you have read what you were told to read, you may as well go, mayn't you? Might save further row. No good in getting up a row, is there?'

Oliver clearly took the warning like the gentleman on the racecourse, in no friendly spirit, to judge from his face.

When the shutting of the door behind Laurence echoed along the walls of the empty room, he caught his brother by the arm.

'Danger!' he cried. 'What danger? Oh! What danger?'

Mr. Harry Stanley made reply slowly.

'There can be none except from the man who wrote the thing,' he said. 'But consider—why should he let on? He lives by writing things. If it were to get about that he's peached, he would lose his living, and go on the parish. And who would he tell? He can't leave his bed except to pull himself about in a wheel-chair; he's got no friends; he's always been such a desperate bad lot that his relations have long since given him the Boot. Besides, if he was to confess in the middle of Leicester Square he might turn the cops on to me, but not to you. If he was to do that, who could connect me with you? And it's his living, I tell you—his living: his whisky, his baccy, his bed, and his room. Sometimes it's an I O U to write and sign ready for a night when the Juggins gets drunk. You can't dispute your own signature in the morning when it's shown you. Many a time I've seen that done. Sometimes it's an acceptance—always there's a signature in it. Generally it's a little job: but I've heard of one or two big jobs—none so big as ours, to be sure—that have come off by his help. Besides it's his pride, he'll prop himself up in his blessed old chair and look at the two signatures side by side and he'll laugh and swear s' 'elp him if he knows, himself, which is the genuine and which the other. No, my boy, that man can't give himself away. He can't do it. If he wanted to ever so much he couldn't—because he hasn't even got any pals; and the house is full of Italians and foreigners. Cheer up, Oliver. Don't look as if you were going to put in seven years of the best at Portland.'

'Well, it does seem impossible.'

'Seem! It is impossible. Think, man. You didn't find the thing. You've got nothing in the world to do with it. Mayes found it, or Mayes' Clerk. Mayes, who swears he remembers signing it. Lord! what a jolly old Liar he is, to be sure! Why it's got nothing—just nothing to do with you. Look here. I've been finding out what will happen. The Treasury chaps will fight. They're bound to fight. Mayes will have to do the swearing. Not you—nor me—nobody but Mayes. They can't call on anyone else. I found that out beforehand. It's as safe a thing as ever was hatched. Because you see, when the perjury is once afloat, he's bound to stick to it. It's as safe as the Bank of England.'

'Then what does the woman mean?'

'Who is she?'

'They call her the Prophetess, but I never heard of her interfering in this way before. As a rule, it's only speaking in strange tongues and preaching and prophesying at her Chapel.'

'There is something up,' Mr. Stanley replied, reflectively,

'that's pretty sure. You've got no quarrel with the woman, have you?'

'I have never even seen her.'

'We've all got people who owe us a turn, and when they get a chance they will stick in the knife and they will twist it if they can. Is there anybody who's put her up to threatening you?'

'Why,' said Oliver, 'there's the girl Cassie, her niece. Perhaps she——'

'What is the matter with the girl?'

'Well—there was a little nonsense at one time and I broke it off and she wanted it kept on, that's all.'

'All? Why, man, what more do you want? Here's a chap! He goes and throws over a girl and then he is surprised when he gets a nasty one from her friends. Why, man alive, you needn't be uneasy. It is all as right as possible. As for you being warned not to go on as you have been going on, it's part of the usual thing. Danger indeed! They can make a row about the girl if they like. Let 'em—it won't hurt you.'

Oliver breathed more freely. If it was only his treatment of Cassie, why—then—they might indeed do their worst.

'You've done nothing,' his brother continued, 'and you've got nothing to fear. Enough said about that. In three months time we shall be about as rich as we can expect. No more of the old game for me. I shall go and live at Paris or Brussels, or some of those places till the memory has blown over a bit, because, you see, my boy, a gentleman can't live on his wits very well, without having unpleasant things said about him behind his back.'

'If the three months were only over!' Oliver sighed.

'I wish they were: you should soon be out of this mouldy old hole and have your own Chambers and live like a gentleman. I wish they were, Oliver, because I want money pretty bad just now. Last night I played on the square—had to—because there were too many eyes about. I lost thirty-two pounds—I did indeed—and I'm stone-broke. How much did the perjurer lend you?'

'Three hundred, and it's all gone except twenty.'

'Give me ten, and stick him for another hundred. A hundred? Get a thousand if you can. And as for danger—why, Oliver, you look white about the gills still.'

'I was thinking again, that if there should be any—But there cannot be—as you say—there cannot be—it is impossible—it is quite impossible.'

Nevertheless he felt ill at ease, so ill at ease that he found it necessary to put the case to himself over and over again in order to strengthen his faith. It was once said by a person of special experience in sinfulness that the greatest punishment

awarded to him as a transgressor was the condition of constant fear of being found out, and the necessity of finding continually new assurances for his own mind that discovery was impossible. This was exactly Oliver's case.

Presently he was so borne down with disquiet, in spite of his brother's brave words, that he walked over to the Southwark Bridge Road and sought Mr. Mayes himself. There was nothing in that good man's appearance to justify his fears. Certainly he looked perfectly confident—it was while he was still under treatment and confidently expecting a speedy recovery of his memory.

'Mr. Luttrel!' he cried. 'Sir, it does me good to see you. Chevalier, you can go. It does me real good to see you. When I look at you, I sez "three months more" I sez. Three months more and the harvest will come in. There will be a reaping and a gathering. On'y three months more. And you as anxious to begin as me, no doubt. Well, Sir, after the other day's assurances, we may rest easy. That young lady won't claim a farthing of the money, not even if she earns it by changing her name. You are quite safe, Mr. Luttrel.'

'Will you back that opinion by lending me another hundred?'

'To be sure I will, and another at the back of that if you please. Come in to-morrow morning and I will find the money for you somehow.'

Here was solid safety. What danger could be meant? To find that Mr. Mayes should be ready to lend him money—more money—on the security of that document was such a relief as may be felt by one spent with long swimming when he finds his feet at last upon the solid rock.

'Then,' he said, 'you quite remember, now, do you?'

'Lord! Yes,' Mr. Mayes replied sturdily. 'If I didn't I should have a softening. The doctor told me that. I must remember. There was a time, I confess, when it did seem as if I could remember everything in my whole life except that one thing. Overwork, says the Doctor, overwork—strain of the nervous system; too much drink and not enough exercise. Only this morning I seemed to remember quite plain. Just now—but there—it will all come right again. The Doctor says so. A few more electric shocks and then—but oh! it's a most expensive business.'

CHAPTER XXX.

ALL THAT SHE WANTED.

FLORRY, rescued and restored, everything blotted out and forgotten, sat alone in her lodgings. She had now, one would think, all that woman can want or pray for. In place of a coarse sack thrown over a heap of shavings, a warm bed with soft clean linen: in place of four bare walls, a furnished room with a maid to wait upon her: in place of starvation, as many square meals a day as she chose to order: and instead of rags, the joy of wearing once more beautiful and becoming clothes. In addition to all this, a release from work, restoration to her people and freedom from anxiety. What more could she desire? Alas! The Gods who still punish us for our sins, sometimes give us all that we want and leave us still unhappy. This poor buffeted creature, so forlorn and lonely, accustomed for so many years to creep along the lowest depths in the Vale of Misery, where the mud is deepest and the thorns are thickest, was suddenly carried clean out of the dreadful place and put into a garden all sunshine and warmth. And yet—yet. When one is always hungry and cold and unsatisfied: so long as one has to ply the needle with feverish haste in order to keep the roof over head and to find the pittance of food which will stave off Death, there is no room for conscience—none at all The sinner can only be truly awakened to the voice of reproaching conscience after consuming one good dinner at least and receiving an assurance of another and yet another to come after. That is the reason why the good people who desire to convert the Jews provide such a beautiful home—you may see it at Hackney—for the reception and entertainment of Enquirers. The greatest criminal goes unrepentant so long as he goes hungry and cold. Thus doth the body still take precedence of the soul. Otherwise, conscience would be stronger than the fear of Death and the sinner would knock off work in order to repent and with resignation lie down to die. In recognition of this great law, the legislators of the future, who will know of no party, and be absolutely indifferent to place, and will no longer eat their words without shame nor stand up before the multitude with brazen brow to denounce what yesterday they glorified—will construct prisons for criminals on the new principle of leaving all the doors unlocked, finding good and abundant food, and offering work on conditions as easy as those which will then prevail outside. There will, of

course be no prison dress, and so strong will be the public feeling on the subject, and so easy the road to repentance and conversion, that the thief and the burglar will sit down side by side to eat and then repent together, and humbly pass behind the Veil, and Magdalen herself shall weep for shame to see how her sisters can forgive, though her own conscience doth never cease to upbraid.

This, alas! was the case with Florry. Her nephew came every day to see her: he walked abroad with her: he took her driving: he gave her pretty things such as the poor soul had always loved: he talked to her continually of his mother; he made her talk of the old days when the two were girls together: he warmed her starved heart with love and tenderness: and as for the past—the thirty years since she and her sister parted—and the dreadful misery in which he found her, Laurence said never a word, even of pity. All was to be forgotten. Nay: it was to be as if there was nothing to forget.

Even Cornelia knows not the true history of those thirty years. Certainly it was not the common story of degradation, drink, and horrible companionship. There were no signs of such things in the poor creature's wan face and hollow eyes: nor in her conversation: nor in her manner, which was as quick to show feeling as in the days of her innocent youth. Was it for one sin, one impatient rebellion against poverty—that the poor creature was punished so long and so terribly? Let us not ask. Now, at length, she who seemed enlarged was truly laid in a Prison: even the Prison where there is no punishment but the presence of the past and the thought of what might have been.

Cornelia made haste to call upon her. In her presence Florry sat like a schoolgirl receiving admonition: or like Job receiving the consolations of Zophar the Naamathite.

'You've come back to your family,' she said, frigidly. 'I didn't bring you back. Mind, if I'd been asked for my advice, I should have said that something weekly, which Lucy wouldn't miss, would have been proper. But he thought different. Very well. For the credit of the family I shall hold my tongue. Though how you had the face——'

'Laurence made me,' she said meekly.

'Althea knows that you used to go about in rags. They say she will marry Laurence. Then there'll be two—him and her—in Australia, who know. You can't tie up peoples' tongues. Pity you can't, but there it is. Well you'll have to make up a story and stick to it. You must end it up with going poor, else Althea won't believe a word of it.'

'Yes,' Florry murmured. 'Oh! nobody knows except you, Cornelia.'

'There's no call to tell Lucy. Not but she'd have pride enough, now. But there's others to consider. Cassie is going out with you and Felix, and nothing will do but the boy must go too. Cousin Laurence says he shall learn shorthand and become a newspaper man. He talks about sending him to Sydney College; but what's the use of college when you are going to be nothing but a newspaper man? There was one in the Bridge Road, I remember, who used to get drunk and beat his wife shameful. Florry, if that boy ever learns the truth, they'll have it out of him and in all the papers, and it will be all over the world in no time.'

'Oh! Cornelia.'

'Claudia said there would be changes. I wonder if she knew or if she prophesied. Women who prophesy get artful. Changes there are, indeed. You've come back, respectable—Flavia is going to marry the Chevalier, and he seventy! They're going to live with Claudia. On the collections, I suppose. There's another Title in the family. More rank, if you care for such nonsense. And now they are at Lucius, wanting to buy the old house and make it an office for the wharf behind. Why, if we sell the house it will be like putting an end to all of us—and who's to have the Punchbowl and the books and the Plate?'

'It would be a terrible pity to sell it,' said Florry.

'You are going,' this amiable cousin continued, 'among carriage company. At least they tell me so. Don't make your sister ashamed of your manners. Though how you will be able to sit among them after all that's past, I can't think. Some folk will brazen out anything.'

'Oh! Cornelia,' murmured the poor woman.

'Mind, you've had a husband, you're a widow. Who was he? what was he? where did he die? what did he leave you?'

Florry shook her head. The necessity of this invention had not yet occurred to her.

'Make him—your Richard—make him a commercial traveller. That's respectable enough, even for her ladyship, I should hope. A traveller in hops—there's a great hop trade in the Borough.'

'Cornelia, I cannot——'

'You *must*. How else will you get on? Will you go to your sister and those innocent girls and tell them—Thirty years ago——'

'Cornelia, oh! spare me.'

'You *must* make up your story and stick to it,' she repeated. 'Well, Florry, I've been a good friend to you, and I'm your cousin, and every right to speak my mind. A sad trouble and disgrace you've been to us, but never shall it be said that I

lowered the family credit by telling anyone.' She rose and shook her scanty skirts. 'Never. There's a family party to-morrow evening, Cousin Laurence gives it, but Lucius takes the head of the table. You are to come. Oh! yes. As if you'd always been respectable. Laurence wouldn't hear of anything else, of course. I hope Claudia won't begin to prophesy, but there's no telling what she mayn't do—such is her conceit, poor thing! There is to be champagne and the Best Service.'

'I will come if I must,' said poor Florry.

'You can begin about your husband to-morrow evening. Get your hand in. Your husband—your Richard—travelled in hops. He died in the North of England, of rheumatic gout. Remember.'

When Cornelia went away Florry sat motionless, her hands clasped, thinking. Generally her thoughts went back to the terrible past, now they were turned upon the future. Alas! It was even more dreadful than the past. She saw herself living with her sister, always a lie upon her lips, dying with that lie unconfessed. No—she would not: she could not. Better even the old life of starvation and misery than thus to live and thus to die.

That evening no one came to see her. She sat quite alone in her room. Laurence was beside Althea while she sang and played. Flavia and the Chevalier walked upon Bank Side hand in hand and made out their future as if the span of threescore years and ten were in his case to be lengthened to the generous allowance accorded to Abraham, in order that the whole world might be converted to the doctrines of the New Humanity and the Early Church. Felix sat with Cassie, eloquent over the great things which await the brave and strong in the Austral world.

She was alone. Presently she took pen and paper—she who had written nothing for thirty years—and began a letter. First she wrote slowly and painfully, but soon her thoughts found expression:—

'I am living in a dream. I expect every minute to wake out of that dream and find that I am again in rags, pinched with hunger. For twenty long years I endured this misery and I cannot understand that it is ended. At first I cried, "Lord, how long?" Then I ceased to look for any end except the end of Death. And now it has ended and yet I cannot feel that with the end of punishment will ever come forgiveness.

'You have made me promise not to speak of the past either to you or to your mother. But how to keep that promise? How can I face Lucy without telling her everything? And it would make her so unhappy. Laurence, I *cannot* go with you.

Let me stay here in obscurity: only give me a little to live upon. I will take that from you. But is it, after all, a dream? Shall I awake once more to the old misery?

'I have had a dream, Laurence—I put down the pen and leaned back in the chair—a low, soft, easy chair—before the fire which I have lighted because the chill of twenty years is in my very bones. I closed my eyes and I had a dream. I saw two girls—sisters. They were poor, but they resolved never to part. Nothing should part them. Then one married, and at first it seemed as if her fate was going to be miserable indeed. But they remained together, and they went abroad together, and while the married sister became rich and honoured by everybody her sister shared in her good fortune and became also a gracious lady loved and honoured. It was such a beautiful dream that the joy of it awakened me and I remembered that it was a dream, because they parted. Oh! they parted—why—why did Lucy let me go?

'The old things come back to me as I now sit alone, old words, old sayings. Oh! I am always in a dream. Just now I heard the voice of my Uncle Vicesimus: he was saying, "I can understand how those who have been injured in this world may easily in the next forgive those oppressors and those who have done them wrong. It is, however, hard to understand how the wrongdoers can forgive themselves." No one was ever so wise as my Uncle Vicesimus. Alas! when he spoke of wrongdoers I thought they were like Indian savages, as far from us and all our ways. There is one way better still. If I were dead.'

When the writer had got thus far the pen dropped out of her hand and she lay back in her chair thinking.

In the days of her wretchedness she had been liable to assault from a certain great temptation, which lies in readiness to spring upon all prisoners and captives and all that are desolate and oppressed. I wonder why the Litany has never taken any notice of this temptation. When Florry was attacked by this temptation, whatever the time or season, she would creep out of her lodging and walk with resolution across Tower Hill and so into Thames Street and a place beside the Street she knew so well. She was dragged to this place as a drunkard is dragged to the public-house.

This evening the temptation assaulted her with such force as she had never before felt. Were I Bunyan I should say that Apollyon stood before her armed with dreadful weapons; with rage in his eyes and fire starting from his nostrils. The Temptation might so be described. On the other hand, this woman—sitting alone at night, a terrible past behind, and a terrible future before: thinking with what face she should meet her sister: with what a

cloud of falsehoods she should hide the past: with what hypocrisy she should sit among the innocent girls—seems a picture more terrible than that of Apollyon. At least one could rush upon that demon and slay or be slain. But there is a Demon who never takes shape, who always hovers around his victims, and never goes away and cannot be assailed by any arms of man. It is far, far more terrible to encounter this Demon of the Valley than the hardest fighting Devil that ever roamed those gloomy depths.

The Temptation came in a voice soft and kindly persuasive. 'My dear,' it said, 'now is the time for you to go. You have rested awhile: you have been clothed and warmed: you can never face your sister: you must not, indeed, think of such a thing. You must now, having been refreshed and restored, give no more trouble to anybody.'

She arose, therefore, being of a soft and yielding disposition, and accustomed to do what she was told. The clock on the mantelshelf pointed to ten. She took up the letter she had written and read over again the last words—

'There is one way better still. If I were dead.'

She put on her jacket and her hat. Then she threw herself on her knees and so remained for five minutes. When she got up she was weeping. She looked about the room as if for the last time, and then, moaning and sobbing, she crept down the stairs and out into the street. From Mansell Street to Thames Street is not far: she crossed Tower Hill: on her left rose up the great white Tower, now black in the night. All the way she was led as by a hand and she was exhorted as by a voice.

Beside the long Quay and Terrace of the Custom House, which at night is closed, there are stairs, broad stone stairs, with an iron railing running down them and a little stone landing-place at the top: you reach the stairs through iron gates in the Street. In the daytime there are boatmen hanging about: survivors of the Thames watermen. By night there is no one. Great timber piles are stuck into the bed of the river just below these stairs, for the mooring of barges, and when the tide is going up or down the water rushes boiling, sucking, tearing at the timbers as if it would gladly pull them up and hurry them away far out to sea.

Hither she came and here she stood looking into the water, while the voice tempted and urged her to plunge in and so make an end. Only one little step: no more trouble: no more misery: no more tears: no more starvation, cold, rags, and shame. Just one step: the river, the rushing river, the kind and merciful river, the river of rest and sleep, would do the rest.

Think, every night there are these wretches gazing at the river, on every bridge they stand: at the head of all the Stairs:

at the wall of all the Embankments. You may even meet them on the River Wall between Barking and Tilbury: they are scattered everywhere along the river bank. They look with longing yet with terror at the rushing water: and the Tempter sings the same refrain for each.

No one was on the stairs: after dark no one ever is on those stairs: she walked to the head of the steps and caught the iron rail and looked over.

The tide was beginning to run down, but as yet the waters were not hurrying and tearing up or down: they were quietly lapping at the steps, and whispering among the piles: but they were very black: the sky was cloudy: the river was dark.

Florry stood there, her hands catching the rail, leaning and listening to the Voice which invited her to step over and finish.

'See,' it said, softly and affectionately, 'the water is smooth and yielding: it will close over you gently: you shall not be banged and beaten against barges and chains: in a moment you will die. To be devoured in the cool and pleasant water is like falling asleep. Farewell, Florry. Farewell—Farewell.'

She would have taken that step. But another voice spoke to her. It was the voice of Lucy.

'Oh! my sister,' it said. 'Oh! my sister—my sister—Florry—you cannot die without a word from me! Wait—wait—wait—till I have time to speak. Florry, wait for only one word of love from me.'

The voice of the Tempter made answer.

'Why wait? She will never know. Nobody will ever know. Lie down—lie down, and fall asleep.' The wash of the water was like caressing music. 'Lie down—lie down—welcome sleep and everlasting rest.'

And then a third voice spoke to her. The voice of Claudia.

'Florry,' she said imperatively, 'go home and get to bed. This minute. My dear, I never mean to let you go again—never—never—not until the Angel of the Lord brings for you the fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the Saints. Go home—Go home!'

She obeyed. She went home crying. And like a child she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'THE SENTENCE OF THE COURT.'

'WHY are we here?' As each came in turn, they looked about the room and asked each other this question, which no one could answer.

Why were they assembled together? For all were there. Lucius and his daughters: Felix: Althea and her father: and Laurence, who knew no more than the others why he had been ordered to assist at an unknown Function. The Chevalier was also present, but now dressed as an elderly gentleman who respects his personal appearance. Nay, was not he about to become a bridegroom? His hair was cut: he showed a grey moustache and a clean shaven chin: his linen was spotless: his dress was as neat as if he still belonged to the Austrian Cavalry in which he had formerly served: his hands—they were small and pretty hands—were cased in gloves, and his boots—who, to look at these boots, would believe in the old cloth slippers?

They were all present, and no one knew why. Only Claudia was absent, and somehow, without being told, everybody understood that she would presently arrive.

The last to come was Mr. Mayes. He was anxious and gloomy because the medical treatment, which he had now abandoned in disgust, had done him no good, and the young general practitioner had assured him that he might now rely confidently on what his patient called a softening. What is the good of coming into money—getting a whole tenth part of Mr. Norbery's Estate—if you've got to go silly after it like Mr. Backler, deceased? Thus fate still loves to mock mankind.

'Look here, Mister,' he addressed Mr. Indagine. 'You're the Master of this House.'

'I am not the Master of this House,' Mr. Indagine replied.

'Well, then, perhaps you will tell me what it means.'

'I do not know. I have not asked anybody here. Althea, please let this person understand that I know nothing about it. Oh! dear! dear! what does this interruption mean?'

'Indeed, Mr. Mayes,' said Althea, 'we are all in complete ignorance, but I dare say we shall know before long.'

'I was told that a case was going to be tried.'

'Indeed? Then you know more than anybody else.'

'A case going to be tried,' Mr. Mayes repeated. 'What sort of a case? Is this the County Court? Is it a Police Court? What does it mean?'

'I do not know. None of us know.'

'There's the Chevalier—look at him—dressed up like a gentleman. That's his gratitude. While he was with me he dressed like a pauper. What's he doing here? I might summons him for going away without lawful notice—it's illegal dismissal—and I will, too. I suppose he's come into a fortune. Got up from the table the day before yesterday and said he was going. Said he wouldn't stand it any——'

'Hush,' said Flavia. 'Here is Sister Claudia.'

She stood in the open doorway. She was dressed as if for Chapel with her black lace mantilla over her head. She threw it aside and stood for a moment looking round the room just as she did in the Chapel. But there was no smile upon her lips: her face was stern and hard. She was no longer the Prophetess of Mercy, but of Justice. She possessed so large a measure of mesmeric force that she became in the eyes of all what she wished to be. Everybody understood that the occasion was one of the greatest gravity, and that, whatever the nature of the Function, this was the President, Judge or Leader. Wonderful that one so small should possess such power and show so much dignity.

But Flavia's eyes flashed. 'At last,' she whispered to Cassie. "At last! Oh! my dear. You shall be revenged. The Chevalier has done it all. He's the only one—and, oh! doesn't he look noble?'

Claudia took her seat solemnly at the head of the table in the Doctor's armchair. The others gathered about the table, except Mr. Indagine, who took his own armchair and sat apart, appearing to take no interest in the proceedings.

'Brothers and sisters,' said Claudia, throwing her veil over her shoulders and raising her face suddenly after her manner before the congregation. Like all who possess the divine gift of speech she made every person present believe that he himself was the special object of her attention. 'Brothers and sisters, I have asked you to come together this day in order to try a criminal before his crime has been legally committed—that is, before the law has been able to take cognisance of it. The guilty person will be here in a few minutes. I have warned him—once, twice, thrice—that he desist from his evil ways. Since nothing else will serve, he shall be admonished in the sight of all, and his crime proclaimed before his own friends. This will be better for us and more wholesome for him than that he should fall into the hands of Justice. In this our Church, we do not hale men before magistrates, nor do we punish them at all save with the outpouring of Love. If men will commit injustice upon us they may do it without fear of the law and its penalties. But we seek to prevent them if we can by other means. The wrong-doer, when he leaves this room, will not be followed by the Law. Nay, if he choose to run further risk, he may continue in his wrong-

doing. But his sin will have found him out, and he shall stand confessed in his true light before you all. I expect Oliver Luttrel to appear before us all.'

She ceased.

Then everybody gasped, because now everybody, except Mr. Mayes, understood who was the wrong-doer. And Cassie caught her sister by the hand.

'Don't let them,' she whispered. 'Don't let them, Flavia.'

'It isn't about you, Cass,' her sister replied. 'It is a very different thing. But he will be punished for his behaviour—no one was ever worse punished.'

Then the door opened and Oliver himself appeared.

As soon as he stepped within the room Felix placed himself, perhaps accidentally, at the door. Certainly it would have been a big and strong man who could force his way through a door barred by Felix.

Oliver looked about him in astonishment. He met faces which were turned upon him with hostility, wonder, or curiosity. Althea's eyes were grave: Cassie hung her head: Laurence looked hard: Lucius, wondering: Mayes—what had Mayes to do with Cassie?—bewildered: the Chevalier, calm and cold. But when he caught Flavia's eyes he read in them exultation and revenge. It was, then, that business of Cassie's, after all.

'What does this mean?' he asked. 'I am come in obedience to a mysterious note inviting me to assist at something—I am not told what. Are we rehearsing a Comedy?'

'No,' said Claudia, sternly.

'Let us get on, then,' said Oliver. 'I have not learned any part, whatever it is. So I will be a spectator.'

'Young man'—no Judge could have been more impressive—no forefinger ever lifted could be more terrible, and yet she was only a little woman—'you have been warned. You have been warned three times. You have been solemnly enjoined to turn away from your wickedness—but you have hardened your heart. Any one who was not rushing upon his fate would have known that his wickedness had been discovered—yes—the whole of the plot—the whole of the conspiracy. I have brought you here, therefore, in order that your friends—those who have loved you—those who have built the highest hopes of your future—those who have believed you to be an honourable man—may learn what manner of man you have become, and of what wickedness you are capable. You are here in order that the last step of that wickedness may be prevented. You are here, also, in order that you may have a loophole of escape.'

Oliver turned white. But he did not speak. The suddenness of this public attack took away the power of speech. His heart was truly hardened and his eyes blinded. For he still

imagined, in spite of this plainness of speech, that the business was that concerning Cassie. This he still believed, although the presence of the man Mayes should have made him understand.

'As,' he said, 'I am not disposed to play any further part in this folly, I shall leave you.'

He turned to go, but Felix stood before the door.

'No,' said the strong young man.

'If I am kept by force,' said Oliver, 'I must stay, I suppose. Go on, therefore, with your business.' He took a chair and sat at the lower end of the table, and tried to look unconcerned.

'Nobody knew,' Claudia replied, 'except yourself and myself and one other. But since nothing else will turn you aside we must take that way. Chevalier, will you tell everybody what you have told me?'

Oliver looked up sharply. What on earth had this man to do with Cassie?

The Chevalier stepped to the table.

'Sister Claudia,' he said. 'For two years and more—until the day before yesterday—I was in the service of Mr. Joseph Mayes.'

'You were,' said Mr. Mayes huskily, Something disagreeable, he now suspected, was about to be revealed.

'I was in the service of Mr. Joseph Mayes,' the Chevalier repeated, in his soft and gentle voice. 'I was his clerk, his cook, and his messenger. Before I was so fortunate as to meet with this employment I lived in a house near Soho Square, filled with foreign people—Italians, Swiss, and others—for the most part as poor as myself. Some of us lived two and three together: in one room of the house, however, there lived by himself—an Englishman. He had once been a lawyer and—I know not—perhaps a man of consideration. For something that he had done he had lost his position and his friends. Everybody in the house had lost those. But this man had lost his honour as well.

'He was paralysed, and sat all day long in a chair with a table before him: he could wheel himself about in his chair: if anybody would sit and drink with him, or play cards with him, he was happy. Sometimes men came to see him on business, and after that he would keep the door locked. Everybody knew that he was engaged upon the devil's work, but it was no one's business to interfere.

'After I came to Southwark upon my new service I used to go to Soho on Sundays in order to see these my former friends and fellow-exiles. My principal friend was one who, like myself, was once a gentleman of Hungary. He is now a waiter at a Club where they dance and feast and gamble all night. For these revellers he runs about opening bottles, and carrying suppers. In the daytime he sometimes plays cards with this Englishman out of kindness. One day, not long ago, the

Englishman drank so much that he fell asleep. On the table lay some papers which he had been writing—my friend saw on that paper a name he knew—because it was the name of my employer—the name of Joseph Mayes.'

'My name—mine?' cried Mr. Mayes. 'I don't remember.' He groaned, thinking this was another symptom. 'That's the second thing I can't remember.'

'My friend therefore copied the paper and gave me a copy. It is here.' The Chevalier pulled an envelope out of his pocket and laid it on the table. 'Then my friend watched and discovered the man who employed this clever writer, and when he gave me the paper and told me the story he offered to show me that man if I would go to the Club with him.'

Flavia followed the story with breathless interest, inclining her head at every point as if to score another. If the Chevalier from time to time turned to her she smiled and nodded approvingly.

'The paper was a very curious paper indeed. It was nothing less than the will of a dead man, rich while he was living, drawn up six or seven years after he was dead.'

Oliver glanced round quickly. No sentinel on duty was ever more conscientious than Felix in guarding that door. He leaned his chin upon his hand again and listened without any further outward emotion at all, except that his eyes shifted uneasily towards Mr. Mayes, who listened with open mouth, breathing heavily.

'The paper interested me so much that I borrowed the dress of a waiter and I went with my friend to the Club. Presently, when the theatres were over and the members began to come in, the man who employed the skilled pen arrived, having with him two ladies and a gentleman. My friend and I waited upon them and gave them their supper and their champagne. When the supper was finished the ladies danced a little and went away. Then the two went to the card-room and played all night. Yes: I waited on them all night long in the card-room. The gentleman who engaged the services of the skilled writer is named Mr. Harry Stanley, and the other gentleman, his companion, you see before you—he sits at the end of the table.'

Oliver made no sign of having heard. But Mr. Indagine at this point sat up, murmuring 'Stanley?—Stanley?'

'So I learned,' he said, 'what had been done. I read the copy which Sister Claudia has before her, until I knew it by heart. And I waited. Now mark. One day, four weeks ago, I was at work for my master, Mr. Mayes, sorting and reading papers for him. He was out. This young gentleman, Mr. Oliver Luttrel, called and asked to see him. He held in his hand, trying to conceal them behind him, a bundle of papers.

He did not go away immediately, but he engaged me in talk, still trying to hide this packet of papers—one has not been a conspirator for nothing—I became suspicious—I pretended to observe nothing. I pretended to turn my head, I pretended not to see when he laid that packet among the papers on the table. I even helped him by covering them carelessly with another bundle. And then he went away. I took up his packet: I turned down one corner, and I wrote thereon an account of how the paper came on the table in small characters and in my own language. There it will be found. Now, Sister Claudia, open the paper on the table and let us know what it is.'

'It is called the last Will and Testament of Samuel Norbery. Shall I read it?'

'It needs not. Word for word it is the same as the paper which I found, and Mr. Mayes thinks is a genuine will. Yes—the forger of that will is the paralysed Englishman. He was employed by Mr. Harry Stanley, and his accomplice is Mr. Oliver Luttrel.'

Oliver lifted his head and spoke quietly and with perfect self-possession.

'This is a very pretty story, indeed: and craftily put together. Two things shall confound you. First, who is this Mr. Harry Stanley, of whom I know nothing, that he should forge a will leaving Mr. Norbery's Estate to his niece? What knowledge should he have of Althea? And next, the will itself: Mr. Mayes remembers and can swear to the signature. As for your copy, of course you must have made it yourself. That is all I have to say.'

But the Poet spoke.

'Oliver, you had once a brother named Stanley. It is your own name.'

And Laurence spoke. 'If the man Stanley is a handsome, black-haired man with a loud laugh and a swaggering manner, I have seen him twice in Mr. Luttrel's company, both at Richmond and in his laboratory.'

Oliver returned to his old position, chin in hand, looking straight before him. And he made no further sign of being moved.

Then Mr. Mayes arose and spoke.

'Chevalier,' he asked humbly, 'is it true that you saw him put the papers on the table?'

'It is true.'

'Is it true that you have a copy of the Will made by your friend before ever it was laid upon the table?'

'It is quite true.'

'Then, Chevalier, why didn't you tell me so at the very beginning?'

'Because you said that you remembered your own signature.'

Then Mr. Mayes made confession. Quite like an Early Christian, as Flavia afterwards observed, he confessed openly.

'I've been a fool,' he said. This, indeed, was the sum of his confession. But he went on to show the nature and the extent of his folly. 'I never dreamed that the will was a forgery, and I thought I ought to remember it. The more I tried the less I could remember it. I was ashamed to own up. I went to a doctor and all—they gave me shocks between the nape of my neck and the tongue: it cost me six guineas a day, and they cut off my drink. When I wouldn't go on any longer they said I should get worse and worse and have a softening and die!—all because I could not remember what never happened. Forger! Villain! Forging Villain!' he roared, turning fiercely upon Oliver.

Cassie shrieked and hid her face in her hands.

'Easy, man,' said Felix. 'You shall have it out with him somewhere else. Easy!'

Mr. Mayes checked himself.

'Yes,' he said. 'Elsewhere. He's borrowed four hundred pounds of me, besides what he's made me pay the Doctors. Yes—I'll have it out with him elsewhere. He shall have no peace till I've got it out of him. Ha!' Mr. Mayes plunged his hands into his pockets. With some men this action signifies resolution. 'Well, I haven't got a softening, and there was nothing to remember. Mind that—I know now, if there had been, I should have remembered it. It's all true. The Chevalier has his faults, but he can't make up lies.'

'Sir,' said the Chevalier, 'I thank you.'

'No—he can't—I believe every word of it. If all foreign noblemen are like the Chevalier, the sooner we bring 'em over in a lump and make 'em clerks the better.'

'Again, I thank you,' said the Chevalier, gravely inclining his head.

'And I haven't got a softening after all,' he sighed heavily. 'As for the precious will—here it is.' He drew it out of his pocket and threw it upon the table. 'I was going to give it to a lawyer this very day. Now I'm prepared to swear that I never did sign that will, and anybody that likes may give it to his lawyer; I wash my hands of it. I've been led to believe that I should get wonderful great things out of it—but what's all the money in the world if you go silly? And as for you—' he turned again upon Oliver, 'I will—I will—I will wait for you outside.'

He left them, Felix opening the door for him and resuming his position as Inner Guard or Tyler.

'One thing more,' said the Chevalier. 'I should like to read the writing of which I have spoken. It is here.' He turned over a corner of the will and showed it clear and small. 'It is written in my own language. Listen. "On this day, August the 15th, 1887, this document was brought to the house and laid upon the table by Mr. Oliver Luttrel, secretly as he thought." That is all.'

Oliver at this point lifted his head and took the paper from the Chevalier. He looked at the writing. He then took up the copy and compared the two with the appearance of one not greatly interested. His curiosity satisfied, he rolled both together, placed them in his breast-pocket, buttoned his coat and resumed his former attitude. No one interfered. The action was understood to be a finish to the whole business. There was an end. Nothing more would be heard of that will.

It was at this point that the Doctor arrived.

'Why,' he cried, 'here is a goodly assemblage. Oliver, my dear boy,' he clapped his adopted son on the shoulder, 'we haven't seen you for ages. Are you giving them a lesson on Science? Why are you all gathered together?'

'We have now finished, Dr. Luttrel,' said Claudia. 'Everybody will go away. The Court has been held. The Sentence of the Court is that everything be forgotten that can be forgotten. In our Church we do not only forgive; we forget: we grieve and pray for such as offend, and we forget. In this matter let us all be Early Christians: let us pray and hope and forget.'

'Why?' said the Doctor, 'what has happened? Of late, something new happens every day. Is this some device of yours, Laurence?'

'No, Sir: this was none of my handiwork.'

'Cassie,' Flavia whispered, 'you see him at last as he is. Now you won't fret for him any longer. Oh! you can't—the wretch! You are revenged, my dear.'

'Let us all go,' said Laurence.

The last to go were Althea and Cassie. These lingered.

'Oliver,' said Cassie, holding out her hand, 'I am going away. I am going to Australia. Let us part friends.'

He refused with an angry gesture.

'You will never see me again, I think. Let us shake hands.'

'No,' he said roughly.

'Give her your hand, Oliver,' said Althea. 'Oh! Let her at least forgive you, Oliver. It is farewell to the old Love.'

'The last illusion we shall destroy will be the illusion of Love,' he remembered his own words.

'Go,' he said, hoarsely.

The girls obeyed, with tears in their eyes.

There were left in the room none but the Doctor, Mr. Indagine, and Oliver.

'What is it, my dear boy?' said the Doctor. 'There is some kind of trouble, what is it?'

'My friend and brother,' said the Poet, laying his hand upon the Doctor's shoulder, 'we have been dreaming. It is time that we should be awakened.'

'What is it?'

'Remember how you started twenty years ago with a great scheme. You brought home a gipsy child. You would educate him. All the hereditary tendencies should be so many steps by which he should rise. You would teach him no Religion: there is, you said, so strong a Natural Religion that he will learn it for himself: and from the Natural he would rise to the Spiritual. That seemed certain to you. You would bring him up with no illusions. He should learn the naked truth: every other man is, you would teach him, a natural enemy: the root of everything out of which the loftiest spiritual life springs is the simple Law of Self Preservation. You remember what you thought would happen. As humanity itself, you said, starting with unawakened brain and nothing but a hunting instinct and obedience to that Law, is destined to rise to such a height as we cannot even yet conceive, so the individual himself may represent mankind and in his own life rise to the loftiest Spiritual level, if he can start unencumbered with illusions and superstitions. By means of reason and science your pupil, your adopted son, would pass through Natural to Spiritual religion. On the foundations of Self Preservation he should rise to Self Sacrifice. Was not this your dream?'

'Well?' But he looked curiously at his adopted son, who sat in the same position with hard-set face.

'You think still, that it has succeeded?'

'I find my boy,' said the Doctor, laying his hand on his son's arm—but Oliver shrank back—'wholly given up to Science. He is feeling his way through Science to the higher Spiritual Levels of which we sometimes talk. He leads the simple life. His heart is set upon the highest things.'

'Oliver,' said the Poet, 'I leave you to your father. Tell him what you please. No one else will tell him anything.'

They were left alone.

Oliver lifted his head. The Doctor was gazing upon him with troubled eyes.

'Speak, my son,' he said.

'I am not your son,' Oliver replied, gently. 'Let us cherish no more illusions. I am a gipsy—always a gipsy—a scientific gipsy—the only gipsy who has ever become a Fellow of the Royal Society. But first of all, a gipsy. I have found my own

people, who, for that matter, have never lost sight of me. You think that I have been living the simple life—meaning the temperate and abstemious life. On the contrary, of late I have been getting as much enjoyment out of my life as I could afford. You think that my mind is wholly set upon science. On the contrary, it is now wholly occupied by contrivances for securing more pleasure. Science, I begin to understand, is only valuable as it affords the means of prolonging life, preventing disease and extending the field of enjoyment. Culture is only valuable as it quickens the senses. We have but one life: let us make, if we can, every moment in it a moment of delight: let us snatch what we can before we die. You thought I should attain to Natural Religion first, and what you call Spiritual Religion next. I have not got to the first and I don't know what you mean by the second. You have always wearied me with your talk of Natural and Spiritual Religion. They are dreams—like your doctrine of Self Sacrifice: they are dreams and shadows. We are all fighting and trampling on each other: the strong men join together and make the weak work for them. The secret of life is to join the strong men and help to keep down the weak. In order to get the means of more animal enjoyment I have attempted a little manœuvre which has failed. They would call it a crime, I believe, but it would have injured no one, and it very nearly succeeded. Perhaps some one else will tell you the details, if you wish to hear them. Can I say any more? I am sorry,' he added, 'for your sake, that your experiment has failed. Looking back, in cold blood, I think you will own that it never had a chance of success. I say that I am sorry. You have been very kind. You deserved to succeed. You will acknowledge, at least, that I pretended, in order to please you, that you had succeeded.'

As for what the Doctor said in reply, that shall remain unrecorded.

Oliver, ten minutes later, passed out of the house and stood in the street.

Before him stood Mr. Mayes with arms outstretched.

'Give me back my money,' he thundered.

Oliver turned to the left with the air of one who neither sees nor hears, and so reached Bank Side. Mr. Mayes followed him, thundering 'Pay me—Pay me—Give me back my money.'

He followed Oliver as far as the Falcon Wharf. There he desisted, promising, however, and loudly repeating his promise, that he would call at the Laboratory day after day, every day, if it was forty years, there to demand his money until he was paid.

He did call the very next day—and every day afterwards for a fortnight—but he could not find Oliver.

When the Professor of Physics of Gresham College came back at the beginning of term he found that his Demonstrator had resigned—leaving a letter. Most important business, he said, had called him away: business which would keep him away for five or six months. Therefore he must regretfully resign. It is rumoured that Oliver is now residing at Heidelberg. It is certain that Mr. Mayes has not received his money.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE HONOUR OF THE FAMILY.

Everybody knew that the supper was provided by Laurence, in honour of the reunion and before the final dispersion of the Family. Althea and her father were bidden to the Feast—that was understood as a sign or token that they were shortly to become more closely connected with the Family: the Doctor was not going to be present—this indicated the complete rupture of possible relations with Oliver: the Chevalier was invited—this marked his formal reception into the Family. Claudia, after eighteen years, would break bread once more with her sister: Florry, after nearly thirty years, would again sit at meat with her cousins: the Banquet should be interesting and even imposing. Up to a certain extent it was both. If that was all, the story of the evening could have been told in very few words. But it was not all, as you shall hear; and the end of that Banquet was, as happens to many Banquets, very different from what had been anticipated. We sit down, for instance, at the Banquet of Life. When we rise from that (occasionally) protracted Feast, with its many courses and its thousand dishes, how has it fared with us?

I cannot suppose that Bank Side, even in the days when the Academy was young and there were no wharves or barges, but only houses of substantial merchants on the Bank, ever saw so splendid a feast as this. One need only suggest its material nature—the chicken, wild duck, plover, ham, tongue, salad, mayonnaise, partridge, jelly, cream, ice cake, peaches, grapes, pears, plums, bananas, pineapples, and other things which go to make a princely Feed in the month of September: one need only hint at the Champagne and the tall red bottle and the short square bottle and the flask in basket-work. But the setting forth of these good things! That indeed was the glory and the Triumph of the Feast. Only to contemplate the mount-

ing, so to speak, of the piece brought tears to Flavia's eyes and would have brought pride unutterable to Cornelia but for one thing.

It is only your old families who have taken root in one spot and lived there for a hundred years at least, who can do this kind of thing properly. Of course, you can get things—stage things—properties—plated things, from the Confectioner. But there are things which no Confectioner can find even in imitation or plate. This family possessed, besides a Best Bedroom, a Best China Service. Its existence was well known: it lay in a certain closet where for forty years and more, since in fact the Christening of Lucius, it had lain wrapped and covered over with napkins. Now it was produced. The girls saw it for the first time: a service in pink and gold: chicken and ham lay in the long dishes: peas and beans and potatoes were served in the vegetable dishes: its sacred plates were placed at every cover. There was also, in the same closet, the family plate—a chest containing spoons and forks of real silver, not trumpery plate. These came forth after long disuse, and were beheld by the family for the first time. They were unfortunately a good deal worn, because the first Academician loved splendour and used these things every day in reckless fashion. There was also, still from the same closet, a Service of fine linen, table cloth and napkins, of splendour so dazzling that every one's heart was uplifted with pride. In the centre of the table was the punch-bowl filled with iced claret cup, the silver ladle swimming on the surface; the silver candlesticks lighted the feast. When Lucius stood at his place and surveyed the table before he took his seat, he felt that now for the first time he realised the respectability of the family of which he was the Head.

He pronounced a benediction of the ancient kind, which had been used in the family in the days of fatness on those great occasions which formerly had been more frequent. It was not the hurried formula which serves very well for cold boiled mutton, but a Prayer before a good Feed. His sisters remembered it and acknowledged the fitness of the occasion.

Then he sat down and looked about him with cheerful eyes. On his right, in the post of honour, sat his newly recovered cousin, Florry. She was agitated: the greatness of the welcome made her colour come and go. With this suffusion and her soft eyes which lifted shyly and drooped again, her shapely head and her still abundant hair, she looked far younger than her cousins. And in her dainty dress and the way she wore it, there showed the girl as she was remembered. Her nephew sat next to her grave and anxious. From time to time she took his hand beneath the table and held it as if for protection. Opposite sat Cornelia in her Sunday black, less rusty than the

week-day wear: her face was set severe. Even the sight of the Best Service could hardly make her smile. Next to Cornelia sat Mr. Indagine, and Claudia next. The young people, including the Chevalier, filled the lower end of the table.

As the banquet proceeded, everybody looked happy except Cornelia and her cousin Florry. The one grew harder to look at, and the other more agitated and trembling. Lucius, with imagination free, saw himself once more honourably placed upon the Higher Branch. Cassie seemed to forget for the evening her faithless and worthless lover—indeed, there needed but separation and change to make her forget him altogether. Claudia was no longer the Prophetess, but the sister of the House.

In his place at the Head, Lucius surpassed the highest expectation that could have been formed of him, though his experience of Banquets was scanty indeed. In recollection of some festivity long ago while his grandfather was still living, and in imitation of that venerable scholar, he invited everyone in turn to take wine with him: on the former occasion the punchbowl contained a more generous potation than iced claret cup—but there was Champagne. And while he drank he talked continually, now to his cousin, now to Claudia, and now to the table, so that the others presently disregarded him, and there arose a susurrus or gentle murmur of talk like the washing of the rising tide among the pebbles.

'This is an occasion,' he said, 'over which my father would have rejoiced. Perhaps—nay, we should not doubt it—he is looking down from somewhere which commands a view. We must not suppose that when we go away from this world we carry with us no further interest in those we love. That were a poor and low estimate of human love. He rejoices to see us welcome this evening a cousin from across the sea—whose feet have been upon Antipodean shores—the son of one whom we have often welcomed beneath this roof at Sunday tea—one whose husband has been ennobled, raised to an exalted rank, by special command of Her Majesty the Queen. We welcome also another cousin who has been separated from us for years too many for us to count. She has come back to us and we shall not lose sight of her again, unless she joins her ladyship across the sea. Cousin Florry, I drink your health.'

'Her husband,' said Cornelia, speaking in snaps, 'her Richard, travelled in hops. He had a large connection in the North of England.'

Florry coloured deeply and hung her head and caught Laurence by the hand. He began to wish that he had not invited his aunt to this banquet. Cornelia's manner warned him of rocks ahead.

'Wherever you have been, my dear cousin,' Lucius con-

tinued, 'it is pleasant to find that you have not forgotten your connection with this honourable and highly esteemed family.'

'Her Richard,' Cornelia continued, 'was not, himself, so honourably connected. But he was justly esteemed.'

Florry inclined her head and gasped.

'You eat nothing, my dear Aunt,' said Laurence.

'I cannot eat, my dear,' she whispered. 'I am choking. Oh! will she never stop?'

'Florry,' Cornelia went on, 'you will go out to Lucy—to Lady Lucy—to Lady Waller, your sister. To me, I confess, she is always Lucy, and I cannot of course forget the old days when she was a daily dressmaker and glad to get it, and you were in the trimmings.'

'Cousin Cornelia,' said Laurence, with the smile which hides admonition, 'the day of small things may be remembered—indeed, it is the one thing which is always remembered—but we do not want to talk about it when we are rejoicing in the day of success, do we? Let us for a moment forget the daily dressmaker and the trimmings.'

'Lucy has gone up,' Cornelia replied, 'but I remain where I was. I suppose I cannot be expected to pretend that I have gone up. I was in the Church when she went away, and I am in the Church still. But of course it is your supper, Laurence, and you have a perfect right to rebuke your elders.'

'My dear cousin,' said Laurence, again smiling, but with grave eyes, 'I was only anxious not to have memories revived which might be unpleasing.'

'I was going to say,' Cornelia explained coldly, 'that when my cousin Florry goes to her sister she will naturally have a good deal to tell her about her husband—who travelled in hops.'

Claudia looked round. She saw her sister nodding at Florry in a meaning manner and observed a look of admonition in her face. She also saw that Florry was visibly distressed and that Laurence was anxious. These things made her watchful.

'We have also,'—it was again the voice of Lucius and he was enjoying the sound of it as much as if he had been Chairman in a Lodge of the Ancient and Honourable Order of Antediluvian Buffaloes. 'We have also to welcome among us this evening one who has long shed lustre upon the Bank for his distinguished services in the cause of Freedom, even though Freedom for the time had to—to knock under. It was Freedom, as the Poet Campbell said, who shrieked when the Chevalier fell. Happily, he got up again. Chevalier, I drink to you. Let us all drink to the Chevalier. We are indeed proud to think that one of this house is about to contract an Alliance with a hero of Freedom, whose exploits will certainly occupy a page—or half a page—of immortal history. The Chevalier,' Lucius explained, as if the

circumstance must be most gratifying to a soldier, 'has run away from four pitched battles.'

The Chevalier, who in his new clothes really looked the very cleanest, neatest, and best groomed old gentleman in the world, bowed gravely to Lucius, and turning to Flavia raised her hand and kissed her fingers. The girl reddened with pleasure and pride: her eyes softened: the demurity went out of her face: her nose grew smaller: her lips curved in the most lovely and most gracious smile: she looked like her sister, or like Claudia: or like Florry—so great is the power of Love in the improvement of a girl's looks. If it were not for that most unfortunate arrangement of nature which takes away a woman's beauty at an age varying from twenty-five to forty-five, I am convinced that one might turn the plainest damsel into a Helen of Troy only by subjecting her to a course of happy and devoted love. That is to say, she must be loved as much as she must love: and the double event, according to the French Proverb, does not always come off.

'Althea,' Laurence whispered, 'will you take me out once more, alone, in your boat?'

'If you would like it,' she replied, with a conscious blush.

'To-morrow, in the evening, if the day is bright, I want one more sunset on the river. You came to me, Althea, out of the Sunset.'

This from a young man who had, as yet, said not one word of love. But they understood.

'You were a goddess, you know, clothed in golden and crimson vapours. Can I ever forget how you floated down straight out of Heaven?'

'Oh!' she murmured. 'You must not talk like that.'

'There is money in hops,' said Cornelia, fixing her cold eyes again upon poor Florry.

'Lots of money! Lots of money!' said Laurence, quickly.

'A glass of wine with you, Mr. Indagine'—the recollection of his grandfather's stately politeness made Lucius the most attentive of hosts. 'It is delightful to think that you are with us—you and Althea—on such an occasion as this. Althea, my dear child, a glass of wine with you. Fill her glass, Laurence. Let it be champagne, the wine that loosens girls' tongues and makes their cheeks glow.' Heavens! How did Lucius acquire the Anacreontic vein? 'Your health, Althea! Mr. Indagine, to you! It has been our happy lot, Sir, to converse almost daily, when the length of day permits, upon the Bank. We have added a chapter to the Literary History of London. As Boswell is remembered by his friendship for Dr. Johnson, so shall I, perhaps, go down to posterity as the lawyer who lightened the conversation hours of the Poet.'

'You shall, my friend,' said Mr. Indagine, much moved, and perhaps *perfusus mero*, warmed with unaccustomed wine, 'you shall. As soon as my poems are ready for publication, I shall begin my autobiography. The chapter on my second Period—that of Seclusion—will mainly dwell on the development of the secluded poet. But they will also contain many delightful reminiscences of yourself and your charming family, of whom I shall ever retain a most pleasing recollection.'

Could anything be grander?

'Cassie,' Felix whispered, 'you are going out with Laurence. So am I; so is Sempronius; I believe everybody is going out. It's splendid! I'm to go up country to Sir David's cattle station to learn the business. What are you going to do?'

'I don't know.'

'No more photographs, I reckon. And, I say, Cassie, you've forgotten that little black beast and forger. You can't think about him any more after all that's come out. You'll let another fellow have a chance, won't you?'

'Don't, Felix.'

'We could have wished,' Lucius continued, 'that the Doctor had been with us. We seem incomplete without the Doctor. Late events—most surprising and distressing events—have shaken him. He excused himself. Rejoicing, he said, was not in his way just at present. Let us say no more about this unhappy business. Felix, my dear boy, a glass of wine with you! When do you start for Australia?'

'In hops'—Cornelia again fixed searching and admonishing eyes upon her cousin—'in hops money may be lost as well as made. Your Richard, I believe, lost his all.'

'Never mind family misfortunes just now,' said Laurence, again interfering.

'This will be our last gathering under the old Roof,' Lucius went on. 'I kept this communication for the last. Children, I have to tell you that we are going to part with the House. Yes—an old house, like a Title, holds a family together. When we give up Bank Side we are dispersed: we shall be like the Ten Tribes, who are scattered over the whole world and lost. The family will be dispersed and perhaps lost. Future ages will ask where are the descendants of Vicesimus Cottle. Like Shakespeare, he will seem, perhaps, to have left none. I have been offered a good sum of money for the place, which is to be turned into an office. When we go, the last of the private families of the Bank will have disappeared, and at evening it will be left silent, with the scrap-iron and the broken glass. The Academy will be finally extinguished. As for me, I have taken counsel with Laurence, and I have come to the serious resolution of going with him to this new world of the South. In my forty-

sixth year I shall become an Emigrant. The word Emigrant,' he added, reflectively, 'has always suggested to me a family sitting on their boxes and tea-kettles, crying. Laurence, however, tells me that we shall not emigrate exactly in that way.'

'He's going, too,' said Felix. 'We are all going; I told you so.'

'Laurence assures me that an intimate acquaintance with the practice of the Higher Branch will command a—a place, though the dignified custom of the Guarantee does not perhaps prevail. Well, children, all is determined. Flavia and the Chevalier will live with Claudia. Cornelia will take care of the Best China, the Plate, the Punchbowl, and the Books until we can have them sent out. Perhaps she will herself bring them out.'

'No,' said Cornelia, 'my place is in the Church.'

'She won't give up the Body,' Felix whispered.

'The only thing that troubles me,' said Lucius—'Mr. Indagine, another glass of wine with you! Althea, my dear—no more wine?—the only thing is that our friends will be left behind. Cassie, how shall we get on at all without Althea?'

'It is for us as well,' said the Poet, 'to make confession. I, too, am going out. Yes. No public announcement of this impending change has been made, and I confess that I do not like to think of what Fleet Street will say. But I clearly understand that it is the best thing I can do. I have gone back to the world. I have prepared my new volume of poems. But the old life has become impossible to me. And as for the new life, I cannot begin afresh. London has grown too big. It was always a terrible place to me, and now it has become much more terrible. The wits have left their old haunts and have gone to clubs. Laurence has taken me to his club, and I confess that I found the atmosphere cold when I remembered the taverns. I have been reading new books, and I find another school of poetry, which I hardly understand. Their metres are strange, and there is a dexterity—sometimes I wonder at my own popularity, and I doubt whether my new book will succeed. If you all go away and leave me, what should I do? So I, too, am going with you. I have taken counsel with Laurence. He loves my talk, and I his society. After the last three months I could not, indeed, get along without him. Althea consents to go, and my young friend shall continue to enjoy my conversation.'

Althea blushed because Claudia smiled.

'Oh!' whispered Cassie, 'we shall all go together, and we shall not be parted, Althea. But I knew very well, all along,' she added in a lower voice.

'It will be lonely when you are all gone,' said Claudia. 'I

have been parted from you, but in spirit I was always with you. Felix told me everything. Well, I cannot leave my people, and I shall have Flavia.'

'It has always been lonely for me in the Church,' said Cornelia. 'Nobody ever comes inside the Church, and I have nothing else to do than to think. I shall think'—I do not know whether this was malignity or stupidity—'how Florry is laughing and singing with you, quite as she used to do when she was a girl. My husband, as everybody knows, was only a verger, and her Richard travelled in hops. I'm a widow, and thankful for my present place. Florry's a widow going to live in the lap of luxury with my Lady Lucy——'

Florry sprang to her feet. 'Let me go! Let me go!' she cried, as Laurence caught her hand. 'Let me go!' and rushed out of the room.

'Cousin'—but Florry was already out of the room—'remember!' Cornelia sank back white and terrified.

'You have been too much for her, sister,' said Claudia, 'with harping upon her husband. She's nervous to-day—I've been watching her. She's shaking all over, and she didn't take any supper. But she was always a small eater. She will come back presently, when she has had her cry. It was Florry's way when she was a little girl to burst into tears and go away till she could leave off. We are all three widows, Cornelia, and I for one shouldn't like to be talked to about my poor Laverock. Let us wait. Sit down, Laurence, she is only gone to have a good cry.'

'She promised, faithful, that she would remember,' Cornelia murmured.

'Poor Florry!' Claudia went on. 'Who knows what her life may have been? Yet she looks almost too young. Something is going to happen when a woman of fifty looks like a girl of twenty. Sister Priscilla, who died the week before last at eighty, looked a girl again half an hour before she died. Some of the brethren said it was because she was already permitted to put on the face of an angel; but perhaps not, because she looked old again in the coffin. Florry's face reminded me of old times. Go on talking, Lucius. Florry will soon come back again. And leave off about her Richard, Cornelia—and—oh! good gracious, what is this?'

Florry had returned. She stood before them, again, but changed. She had torn off her black silk dress and I know not what beside, and now stood before them dressed again in her old duds—the stuff frock, weather-stained, torn, ragged: the rusty jacket with open seams: and in her hand, dangling, the oldest and most misshapen head-covering that was ever seen. And alas! her face was no longer young: the bloom had left

her cheek again: she was wan and thin: she lifted her eyes, but they were filled with despair.

'Florry!' cried Cornelia, 'how dare you? How dare you? She could say no more.

'I have no right to be here,' said Florry. 'Forgive me, all of you, for sitting among you. I have no right, Laurence! Oh! you kind—good—boy. No—no—don't touch me—don't dare to touch me—Lucy's son—oh! happy Lucy! Give her my tender love. Oh! what will she care for any message from me when she knows?'

'Remember! Oh! remember, Florry,' cried Cornelia.

'I have remembered.' She sank upon her knees before them all. 'I am what you have often called me, Cornelia—I am the Disgrace to the Family. I have never had a husband. All that Cornelia made up about me was false. Forgive me. I will never trouble anybody any more. Forgive me.'

She rose quickly, and was gone. Before they understood what she had said—what it meant—she disappeared.

Thus ended this most splendid Banquet.

'Oh!' Cornelia snapped her lips with wrath irrepressible. 'She promised, faithful. And we've always been so respectable.'

The first to recover was Laurence, who, while the rest were still staring in amazement, hurried out after the fugitive. The boy Sempronius followed him.

A moment later he returned with white face.

'She's jumped into the river!' he cried. 'I saw her jump, and he's jumped after her, and the tide's running out strong.'

Yes. Laurence was just in time to see her spring upon the low wooden wall and hurl herself headlong into the black waters below. He leaped upon the wall, saw her, a black lump, rolled about in the tumbling hurrying waters.

A strong ebb tide was tearing and dragging the water down stream: at the spot where the woman jumped in there were no barges: the current caught her and rolled her over and over. Whatever air was in her clothing kept her from sinking. Was she unconscious? Did she feel in those brief moments the horror of violent death? Did the cold water awaken her senses, or did it dull them? Did she see—as some have reported who have gone through the first stages of drowning—the whole of her past life revealed to her at a single glance with the consciousness that nothing ever dies?

Laurence saw and leaped after her. Oh! Lucy, sitting in the verandah of the Sydney home, did no thought of the peril of thy son and thy sister disturb the peace of thy soul? Yet, but

for one thing, they would now be lying in their graves, and thou wouldst still go in sorrow to thy last day.

'She's jumped into the river!' cried the boy, 'and he's jumped after her.'

Then Althea ran swiftly and caught the light sculls of her skiff from where they stood in the narrow hall, and rushed down the Bank Side stairs, and before they knew what she was doing, she had untied the painter and cast off the boat. She looked across and down the river while her boat was dragged out and hurried down by the current. The water looked black: there was a little light above from the stairs, and lights from the bridge were reflected on the river. Then she made out the black rolling lump—which must be Florry. And then she saw another and a smaller lump—only a moving spot in the water—that must be the swimmer. And then she sat down, put out her sculls and pulled with all the strength that her twenty years and her long practice on the river had given her. With strong arms and swift strokes she rowed, and the boat gained upon the swimmer and the swimmer gained upon the drowning woman.

'I am coming, Laurence!' she cried, presently. 'Laurence, I am coming! Keep up—keep up, I am coming!' But Laurence heard nothing.

She said no more, but pulled as never woman pulled before. When she reached them, Laurence was swimming beside the floating form, wondering how on earth he could tow or drag it ashore before the woman was drowned. For she lay upon her face, and her head and arms were under water.

'I am here, Laurence!' cried a voice—oh! how welcome!—close beside him. 'I am here. Quick! one hand on the scull and the other under her head. Hold the scull tight. I am quite strong.'

'Turn her bow a bit—so—one stroke more. Now I have her. I cannot lift her, Althea'—he had one hand on the scull and the other on Florry's jacket sleeve—'but I have got her tight, and she doesn't seem to be sinking. Ship the other scull. Lean over the bows. I can pull her along the scull—this way—so—catch her by the collar and hold her tight. Have you got her?'

'Yes—yes—I have her tight. The water rolled her over—I can lift her face out—she is not heavy. Can you get into the boat? Try to climb over the stern.'

Laurence passed his hands along the gunwale and climbed over the stern—not an easy thing to do when one is encumbered with wet clothes.

'Take off your wet coat,' said Althea. 'Now take the sculls and pull us back as fast as you can. A little more in shore so as

to get out of this dreadful current. What a long way we have come down the river! No, don't mind me, she is not heavy, but oh! I think she is dead. Poor woman! Poor creature! I did not know her in her pretty dress. I remembered her when she appeared in those poor rags of hers. Oh! how she must have suffered! Oh! poor creature—poor creature!'

Laurence said nothing, but pulled with all his might.

'She neither moves nor speaks,' Althea went on. 'If we had only got her on shore again! Her face is quite white and her eyes are closed, and oh! the cold water dashes over her. Laurence, do you think we shall save her? There are the cranes of Bank Side; I can see them now. You can go a little closer to the Bank. Now—oh! here are the stairs, and all of them crowded on the wall.'

It was another arm which lifted the senseless form from out of the water—it was the strong Felix, not Laurence, who carried her up the stairs and across the road and laid her on the bed, while Claudia bent over her and tried to bring back the soul which seemed to have fled.

'Althea,' said Laurence, 'you brought me back to life a week ago. I had only just begun to understand the joy of living, and now you have saved me again.

'Go in quickly,' she replied, 'and change your things.'

They all trooped back to the house, where Cornelia sat in her accustomed place, her hands in her lap: on her cheeks a spot of red which marked her wrath and shame: and her lips were working, but what she said to herself I know not.

'She has been brought back,' said Lucius.

Cornelia tossed her head.

'She is senseless—we fear that she is dead.'

'She should have died long ago,' said Cornelia.

Florry opened her eyes a quarter of an hour later, after the most prodigious exertions of Dr. Luttrel. She was lying in bed, and at the bedside were Claudia and the three girls.

'My dear,' said Claudia, 'don't ask any questions. You are in the old house—you are in the Best Bed.'

'I thought—I thought——'

Presently she was so far recovered that she could listen and perhaps understand something of what was said. A strange restfulness fell upon her spirit. The words of Claudia dropped upon her ears like music, and her soft caressing voice soothed her as if to sleep though she remained broad awake.

'Florry, dear'—the voice reminded her of the waves playing about her head—'now we understand it all—poverty and suffering and all. My dear, we know all that we need ever know. You have suffered—oh! my dear, you have suffered, how much you have suffered! All the misery in the world seems sometimes

heaped upon one person. That we cannot understand. You shall not go out to your sister, my dear. You would be unhappy because you would be ashamed. You shall not have to make up lies and live in daily terror. Lucy would forgive, but you would never forget. You shall not go to her. There is only one place where you can go. My dear, long ago I found peace and rest in the Communion of the Early Church. It is among the brethren that you shall live. There we are all brothers and sisters alike. It is Love that rules us. Where there is Love there is no room for forgiveness. If any sin, we love him still, though he continue in sin. But Love casteth out sin. No one can resist Love. If any are repentant, Love dries their tears and warms their heart: if any would forget the shame of the past, Love drops a veil which hides it. Love cannot gibe: Love cannot mock: Love cannot upbraid. Love is tender: Love thinketh always of the other and never of himself.' She clasped her hands, her cheeks glowed and she raised her eyes. She was now the Prophetess of Love and Mercy. 'You shall live with me, Florry. We ought never to have let you go. But we were younger then and ignorant. Do not answer, dear. Shut your eyes and sleep. When you awake, remember that henceforth there shall be no shame for you, or reproach. If you sorrow or repent, that is between the Lord and yourself. Yet we may help. With us there is nothing—nothing—but Love—Heavenly Love—true and unselfish and abiding. This is the kiss, my dear, of Brotherhood. You are now one of us.'

Florry closed her eyes and went to sleep obedient like a child.

Claudia remained to watch. But the girls went down stairs, tearful and silent. Below, Laurence walked backwards and forwards. It was midnight but no one thought of bed.

'She is quiet and sleeping,' said Althea. 'We may all go now. Come, father.'

'We had the best China,' said Cornelia, her handkerchief to her eyes, 'and the Plate brought out. She promised me faithful. No—Lucius, no, I can *not* forgive her, and it's no use pretending. And now, after all, she's had the Best Bed and Claudia prophesying over her. No, brother, no. I can't do it. I know my duty to the Family, if you don't, and I can't.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE END.

'At last!' said Laurence.

He was alone with Althea and in the midstream rowing up the broad river on the flow of the tide. The warm September sun was sloping to the west, but still the City on either hand lay basking in the warmth and light.

'We must take to Australia with us,' he said, 'and never forget, this picture of the river in the evening glow.'

'As if I ever could forget the river,' said Althea.

He rowed on in silence past Waterloo Bridge, past Westminster, past Vauxhall. Opposite Battersea Park he stopped and looked about him. He had brought Althea to the very same place where they first had a talk. She very well understood why.

'It was on a morning in June,' he said, 'that you brought me here. I remember every moment of that morning. Have you forgotten it?'

'No,' she replied softly.

'Only three months ago. I came home for a simple holiday. I was going to see everything before I went out again. I came to Bank Side just to amuse myself. I thought I would write a letter home about my remarkable cousins, and then go away and forget them all. To forget them! That was my thought. You were among them. I was to go away and forget you all.'

Althea made no reply.

'That morning in June—he went back again to that morning. 'I remember the fresh breeze, the flying shadows and the sparkling water. You showed me all the places on the Bank as we rowed up. Your mind was so full of them: you were so eager that I should miss nothing: you talked as if they were all your own property—and you were so beautiful, Althea—Oh!—you were so beautiful that I was almost carried out of myself.'

The tears came into Althea's eyes—I know not why.

'And then while we drifted here you fell into silence, and I saw that your eyes were looking far away—and you had fallen into a dream. Do you come here still to dream and see ghosts—Lord Bolingbroke and Addison on this bank, and on that Sir Francis More, and on the river the stately barges with the physicians and their great periwigs?'

'No,' said Althea, 'I see no more ghosts. They have all vanished—my poor ghosts—ever since we have been taken out of our seclusion and seen the living world. Since you came,' she added.

In every tale of true love there comes a moment—the one fitting moment—the supreme moment of the wooing when the last word should be spoken and the lovers should fall into each other's arms. If it is delayed, it is like letting a bottle of Champagne stand after the cork has been taken out. Something is lost—a little of the sparkle, a touch of rapture, a little of the life—every minute. On the other hand, if the word is hurried and spoken too soon, ther is uncertainty with doubt and anxiety. The true joy of Love is clouded. Oh! that young men would therefore ponder these things! And seeing that it is only once in a man's life—unless he be a Rover—that this joy can be experienced, is it not a thousand pities that it is so often miserably spoiled by being rushed, or lamentably made stale with delay? Perhaps the maidens should look to it: the golden opportunity should never be granted until they are perfectly sure of their own minds and the mind of the young man.

Althea knew nothing of Love except as a sweet and beautiful extravagance invented by poets for the purpose of weaving lovely verses and sweet conceits and music that should steal over the senses and hold them prisoner. It had been an unreal thing. As for the thing called Love—the Art of Love—why does no modern poet write a new Art of Love?—the Principle of Attraction, the Nature of Selection, and so forth, she understood no more than she understood the art of Flirtation. Poets, you see, are generally vague even when they are most splendid. Now she knew something—Love was no longer an unreal thing: it seemed to her, as indeed it is, a most divine gift bestowed by Heaven upon all mankind, and like all the gifts of Heaven, proportioned to the capacity of each, so that with one it is of the earth, earthy; and with the other—but this is too high for us. With all her ignorance Althea knew that this day her lover would speak to her and she would give herself to him.

'The ghosts are gone,' he repeated, 'and the living world is with you at last. There should be one ghost left, Althea. Do you never see a ghost who is always, day and night, thinking of you, who asks for nothing better than to think of you and for you all his life, to be your faithful servant always and your lover always? Tell me, Althea, do you never see that ghost?'

'Yes,' she replied with her sweet frankness, which went to her lover's heart more swiftly than the most artful wiles, 'I feel his presence always. But only,' she murmured—'only for the last few days.'

Should he at that momen have spoken the last word? Surely there wanted no more.

'I must confess to you, Althea,' he said with an effort, 'I cannot speak what is in my heart until I have made confession. Your father thinks that I came from Australia to gaze upon him. He is quite mistaken. He assumed it. I have never known why, but I did not undeceive him, and when once I had left it in his mind it became impossible to undeceive him. It made him so happy to think that his verses were read everywhere—and it made you, too, so happy, that I encouraged him to believe it. I went further—I wrote a review and printed a sheet like the inside sheet of the *Saturday Review* which carried on the deception. And then he walked with you down Fleet Street. The people talked about the Poet—he took it for himself. The Poet is the nick-name of a Prize-fighter.'

'I know. Felix told me. They were shouting the nick-name of a prize-fighter, and we were so simple as to believe——'

'Nay, it pleased him. Why not? He shall never be undeceived.'

'I know more than you think,' said Althea. 'The *Saturday Review* article, I have learned, was never in the paper, because I bought a copy with the date. Is it all pretence? Has my poor father no readers—no fame at all?'

'None, Althea, none. His volume fell flat and dead. He has no readers. He is absolutely unknown.'

'My poor father!'

'He will go with us: he will live in our quiet country: our friends will know that he is a poet and has published poetry: his new volume will come out, and he shall never be undeceived. Althea, it was for your sake that I conferred this imagined happiness upon him.'

'I know—I know.'

'And he will have you with him, Althea—and—and he shall have me with him, too, his faithful disciple, if you will suffer me to be with you always—always. Oh! my dear—my dear——'

His voice broke. That was all he said. Not till afterwards did he tell her how much he loved her. He only took both her hands and drew her gently and kissed her on the lips, twice. In the evening the poor girl reflected that this thing was actually done in an open boat, in broad daylight, and in the middle of the river: it was actually visible from the Chelsea Embankment: from the houses behind it: from the long walk of Battersea Park: and from two bridges. She turned very red only to think of it. So very red that she looked more beautiful than ever, and if her lover had been there to see, he must have kissed her again. I wonder if any actually witnessed the deed. There was a belated nursemaid in the Park who ought to have been home for

tea long before, with her perambulator and the two babies. There was a Policeman looking over Chelsea Bridge, but a Policeman regardeth not a kiss any more than Behemoth regardeth a daffodil: and there was a housemaid looking out of a top window of Cheyne Walk. But if they saw it I know not.

The boat drifted slowly with the stream, the water plashed melodiously upon her bows and rippled along her sides. Laurence sat with the girl's hands in his, murmuring things sweet and foolish. Of most things foolish there cometh repentance in the end, and of most things sweet there cometh satiety: but never doth there come repentance or satiety for the sweet and foolish things of love. As for what the young man called his mistress, how he whispered of her beauty and her sweetness, and her grace—to Althea herself these words seemed far to surpass the most beautiful things that had ever been written by the most divine poet. Which shows that everybody who is really in love becomes the finest poet in the world to the imagination of his sweetheart, and since only imagination is real, this is hard reality. For though the words of the poet be so melodious and so craftily interwoven with rhymes that ring like bells and a measured music which brings tears to the eyes, or joy to the soul, or dancing to the feet, they lack the music of the voice, the beating of the heart, the warmth of the hand, and the longing of the eyes.

Presently he remembered something, and letting her hands go he drew a packet out of his pocket and opened it, smiling.

'You chose them yourself, Althea. Give me your finger, the third finger of your left hand. This is the magic ring: I am the slave of the ring: and this bracelet is a part of the chain which binds me: and the necklace is the tribute and token of my allegiance—my dear—what can make you look more beautiful?'

By this time the sun was sinking low.

'You came to me, Althea,' he said, 'out of the sunset. You were in a magic bark, wrapped in a magic glow of golden red and purple, such as never before shone upon mortal watcher. Oh! my dear, can I ever forget it? You came straight from Heaven's gate—I thought it then—I know it now—can I ever doubt that? You were sent to me. And now in the light of the sunset you come to my arms. Oh! my love! my love!'

On the Bank, so fine was the evening, they were all gathered together.

'You will all go,' said the Doctor, sadly. 'I shall remain behind. Urge me no more, Clement. I have given my life to these people, and I must spend among them what remains. I had a son, but he is gone. I had a dream, but that has gone too. Leave me all that remains—to work among these poor.'

'In the Antipodes,' said Lucius, 'we shall establish another Bank which shall become, like this, an Exchange such as my father desired for the communication of ideas.'

At the head of the stairs stood Flavia and her elderly lover hand in hand.

'Look,' she said. 'Look, Cassie! Look, Chevalier! Here come Laurence and Althea. Oh! How beautiful—how lovely she is! Look at her face—and at his. She drops her eyes and he is looking at her. Oh! he has spoken at last—and she has said yes. What else could she say? Oh! Happy Althea!'

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